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A TALE OF TWO BRUSHES

By the Same Author :

PETER BECKFORD, ESQUIRE

THE MEYNELL OF THE WEST

THE HUNTS OF THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

With JULIAN INGERSOLL CHAMBERLAIN

LETTERS FROM AN OLD SPORTSMAN TO A YOUNG ONE

HUNTING IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

With JULIAN INGERSOLL CHAMBERLAIN

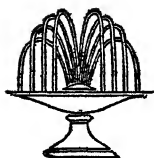
AS HOUNDS RAN

TRY BACK

A TALE OF TWO BRUSHES

by

A. HENRY HIGGINSON



COLLINS
48 PALL MALL LONDON
1943

To
GUY AND PATIENCE AND—"PIPER."

The Author wishes to acknowledge with thanks his indebtedness to Captain Stacy B. Lloyd, Jun., Owner and Editor of The Chronicle (U.S.A.), who is now serving with the United States Forces in England, and to Brian Vesey-FitzGerald, Esq., Editor of The Field, for their kind permission to include in this volume stories which have previously appeared in their publications.

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FOREWORD

ONE sometimes hears nowadays that foxhunting only exists in England—or anywhere else for that matter—as a pastime for the rich. People who hold that point of view are apt to add that it is a burden on the farmers and should be done away with.

These are troublous times in Great Britain—in the world for that matter—and the very existence of the sport is threatened, not only by the shortage of forage for horses and hounds, but also by the reduced incomes which are available for the maintenance of Hunt establishments. I do not mean to infer from the above statement that there is any scarcity of foodstuffs for human beings and for all essential animals; but, naturally enough, hounds, which are in no way necessary for the economic welfare of the community, must be placed near the bottom of the list when it comes to the allotment of food supplies.

Although I have lived and hunted in England for the past fifteen years and have observed the affection in which the sport is held by people of every class, I do not think I had become aware—until the present crisis arose—what a strong hold the sport had on the farming community, on whom, to a very great degree, the welfare of the sport depends. Except in the case of the great landowners, who are rapidly disappearing, foxhunting depends to a great degree on the goodwill of the tillers of the soil and it is my experience that the Poet Laureate's words—that it is "a sport loved and followed by both sexes, all ages, and all classes; something in which all who come may take a part, whether rich or poor, mounted or on foot"; are true. "At a fox hunt," he tells us, "and nowhere else in England, except perhaps at a funeral, can you see the whole of the land's society brought

together, focussed for the observer, as the Canterbury Pilgrims were for Chaucer."

How true this all is. When war was declared, hunting men were among the first to offer their services and I feel very sure that the fighting men of all ranks, wherever they may be, look forward to coming back to a land where the sport which they loved so well, has been kept alive for them.

What more natural then that, until those happy times return, they should like to hear something of the way the sport has been fostered during their absence?

And so, I have written these little stories—a few of them of happenings which took place before the war—many of them during its progress, in the hope that they may bring back happy memories to men who like "Guy Canfield" are serving their country in far distant lands, and to women like Patience who with "Piper" who carried her so brilliantly through the great hunt of which I have told in "A Tale of Two Brushes," waits for his return home.

A. H. H.

Stinsford House, Dorchester,
June, 1943.

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A TALE OF TWO BRUSHES

IT WAS New Year's Day—New Year's Day six years ago—before the present war, which has changed everything, had broken out, though there were rumblings even then. King George V. was still on the throne and the men of the army had little to do, except those who were on foreign service. I had dined a few weeks before at the mess of a famous Yorkshire regiment, whose colonel had honoured me by seating me at his right, and putting on my other side a young officer, who has since been decorated for bravery. He happened to be a hunting man and we had much talk on our favourite sport, while the colonel confided to me that he was going to see to it that we had a good attendance of officers during the season at the meets of the local hunt, of which at that time I happened to be the Master. In fact, it was because of my position in the hunting world that I had been asked to the dinner, so that I might meet some of the men who were proposing to hunt with us that season.

I had very pleasant recollections of that gay evening and when I rode up to the meet on that New Year's morning, I was glad to see among the field which had gathered on the little green in the centre of the cluster of thatched cottages which forms the village of Rampisham, several members of the regiment with whom I had dined. Bill Adams was there and Reggie Barker and "Tiny" Wright, with a tall good-looking youngster whom I did not know, whom he introduced to me as one of the younger members of the regiment who had been away on special duty and had just rejoined the mess.

"This is Guy Canfield," he said, "I hope he'll be hunting with us regularly." I murmured a few polite words and then nodded to my whipper-in, who moved up the road towards

the first covert. We found at once in Rampisham Fern and ran towards Ridge, but scent was very bad and our fox evaded us easily. Rampisham Wood was crawling with foxes that day, and we chopped one and marked another to ground in the next half-hour, but scent was catchy and it was not until an old dog fox was holloaed away from Wraxall Big Wood that matters began to mend. Our pilot ran hard through Rampisham Wood and crossed the road into Kingcombe, where he evidently hoped to baffle the pack on the stony, bad-scenting ground. I think that he must have carried a far better scent than those which we had found earlier in the day, for hounds were driving very hard and forced their fox straight through the covert, running over the hill and past Higher Kingcombe and crossed the road near Hooke village. It was a nice line of country and the field were well spread out, taking the fences where they listed. In the van I noted the little group of soldiers, who evidently intended to see all there was to be seen of that hunt; though, to do them justice, they did not over-ride hounds.

They would have had a hard time to do it that day, anyway, for scent seemed to improve, and we drove on at a good pace through Witherstone and finally into Hooke Park, where, alas, we were unable to keep them in sight in the tangled wilderness which is only rideable on the higher ground. In the spring, when the primroses and bluebells are out, there is no lovelier place than the low-lying rides of this covert, but in winter, particularly on wet days, the going is very treacherous, and one must be careful to keep in the higher part of the covert; and so it was that, although we could hear the bitches running hard below us, it was almost impossible—or so I thought—to get to them. The cry stopped suddenly.

“I believe they’ve killed, Master,” my first whipper-in said, “or marked to ground. I’ll go down and see if I can get to them.” He turned his horse, but just then there came

the sound of a "Who-whoop" from the wood below us, which was repeated several times.

"Who's that?" I asked. "It's not Jack; he's on the far side of the covert."

"I think it's one of them young officers, Sir," he answered. "I see one of 'em go down that ride ahead of us."

Well, to make a long story short, we rode down into the covert and found the young soldier whom I had met that morning, holding up what remained of the hunted fox which hounds had killed. His horse was tethered to a tree nearby, and he was surrounded by hounds.

"I followed the ride down," he said, "and just as I came to the end, I saw the fox coming, dead beat, with hounds snapping at his brush. He tried to dodge 'em in that ditch there, but they caught him and broke him up before I could get down. I couldn't save much of him, but here's what's left." He handed me a hind quarter to which was attached a very bedraggled brush. I looked at my watch. We had been running a little over an hour.

"Not a bad hunt," I said. "Your first day with the Cattistock, isn't it? I think you'd better have this," handing him the brush, which I had stripped off. "You certainly were the only one who was up. I think we'll call it a day. Better come back and have a bite of lunch with me. One of the men will take your horse back to the stable. My car is not far off." As we rode out of the covert, there was the car, sure enough, so we turned our horses over to the waiting grooms and were whirled back to eggs and bacon and coffee before a blazing wood fire.

That was my first meeting with the "leading man" of this little play, if one may call it so. The other part was played by a certain girl from the New Forest, who had hunted with my pack, on and off, for five seasons. When I first saw her in the field, she was riding a brown pony, and I took note of her first because she was a very pretty girl, and second because she was always in front and yet never in any one's

way. She used to visit some friends in the Cattistock country, usually for about three weeks, at the beginning of the season, and odd times at later periods; and somehow, I noticed that she always had the luck to pick the best days of the season, and for that reason, I called her, long before I ever knew her, "Miss Good Luck." I suppose we showed her good sport at Cattistock, for she came more and more often each season, and we all of us came to admire the way she went in the hunting field. I think that several of the eligible bachelors in the hunt had their hearts sadly affected—but she would look at no one—and I know that among her many suitors were officers from the Yorkshire regiment. Guy Canfield was not among them, though how as keen an eye as his had missed so fair a vixen, I have never understood. One summer, however, the regiment went on manœuvres which took them to the New Forest, and there, apparently, with the pleasures of the chase dormant during the off season, they discovered each other; and that autumn I attended a gay wedding party and had the pleasure of blowing the bridal pair away with my hunting horn.

Several seasons went by and as long as the regiment was quartered in the Cattistock country, they both hunted with us—the captain—for he had got his promotion—when his duties allowed, and his "vixen" as often as her gallant little piebald—for she had outgrown the brown pony—could be brought out. It was very pleasant to see them in the field, and it was a sad day for us all when the regiment was ordered overseas.

"Keep your eye on my girl, Master," the captain said to me when he left. "Don't let her take foolish chances." He might just as well have asked me to control the foxes themselves; for when she was on "Piper," nothing could stop her, and as far as I could see, nothing could put "Piper" down. I used to write the reports of the hunt for the papers in those days, and I always took pains to send the cuttings from the papers to the lonely soldier. Those were lonely

days, too, for the bride of a few years, but that is the life to which a soldier's wife must look forward, and of which a soldier's wife never complains; and never a word of complaint did I hear from her. The little house in the Dorset village in which she lived alone was full of trophies of the chase, and among them was that brush which I had given to her husband after the day of which I have written, his first with the Cattistock hounds. There was another trophy yet to come, and it is of the day which brought it to her that I want to tell, for to me it was as odd a chance of fate as I've ever seen in the hunting field.

The hunt started from a marshy bit of meadowland not far from Mosterton village, where hounds had met some hours before. We had had a decent morning; nothing much, but a long enough burst to thin out the field, and to send those people who came out more to show off their new scarlet coats than anything else, home. I suppose there were about a hundred left when Hewlett holloaed away a gallant old dog fox, and the mixed pack—Holland was hunting hounds that day—came racing to him and settled down to run over the grass towards Pickets. The Axnoller River has its source at Banks's a mile further east, and it is not a big stream at the point at which hounds crossed it, but it is rather awkward and the field was a little smaller as they crossed the road and galloped behind the flying pack which ran on past Cheddington Court and crossed the Toller Down road at Wynyard's Gap. "Pat" and "Piper" rarely missed a meet in the Saturday country and they were out that day, always in the first flight. The hunt was so fast that one had no time to do much looking about, but I did manage to see most of those who crossed the road at this point, and the piebald was among them. The field split at Weston Gullies, part of us going through the covert in an attempt to stay with hounds. They got away from us at the far end, but just as we came into the open, I heard a holloa and saw hounds settling to the line where a figure sat on a piebald

pony with her hat high in the air. No need to tell of the progress of that hunt for the next forty minutes. Of the brilliant cast that Holland made to hit off the line towards Corscombe village, where our pilot sought refuge in the main earth at Corscombe Rocks, only to find it stopped. There was a short check there and those of us who had second horses out were lucky to get them; those who were not—most of them—had to pull up when hounds crossed the Toller Down road for the second time, and there were not more than twenty who were with us as we galloped over the hills above Langdon Manor. Of these only a dozen remained when we checked above the Mapperton Vale, but one of them—the only one who had no second horse—was the girl on the piebald pony. He was a wonderful bit of horse-flesh, that: all muscle and sinew, but that day the pink skin underneath the white splotches on his coat showed through so that he looked almost like a pink and bay horse. The huntsman was on his second horse, the whippers-in had theirs; one other girl was there, but she too, like me, had met her second horseman. "Piper" was the only horse who had been through it all—and yet, as we raced down the Vale towards Hooke Park, he seemed as fresh as ever.

Hounds crossed the meadow just as they had on that day three years before and vanished in the tangled covert. We galloped down the ride and pulled up at the same corner where Holland and I had stopped that day to listen. Hounds were driving on towards us when suddenly the cry grew more insistent and then stopped—suddenly.

Like a shot Holland galloped down the ride, and an instant later we heard his glad "Who-whoop" ring out on the evening air, and presently he came out leading his horse and handed me the brush of his hunted fox, just as that other had been given to me years before.

"Same place we killed that fox from Wraxall Big Wood three years ago, Sir." The girl looked up at me.

"May I have that brush, Master?" she said, "to hang

beside the one you gave Guy on the day when he first hunted with you—the day he was alone with hounds when they killed—it's just the same place, isn't it?"

"Yes," I answered, "just the same," and handed it to her. "I'll cable him to-night when I get home about you and 'Piper.' Shall I give you a lift home; the car is outside the covert and my man can take 'Piper'?"

"No," she answered, "not to-night. I think I'll stay with 'Piper' to-night."

When I got back to my cottage I sent a long wire to Malta. This is the answer that came back:

"Thrilled about Mosterton hunt and my girl and Piper. Remember Hooke Park fox well. One of his cubs I expect. GUY."

Perhaps it was. Any way, that hunt brought happiness to two people, for a few days later, when I met her, she said to me:

"I'm going out to Malta. Guy has sent for me."

THE BUTCHER'S DELIVERY HORSE

I THINK it was John Mills who wrote a book called *The Life of a Race Horse*—I am not sure; but I know that it was Henry Alken who painted a series of pictures illustrative of that subject. He called the set "The High-mettled Racer." The series shows the various stages in the life of a thoroughbred, from foalhood to the end of life, in a knacker's cart. They tell rather a sad story, a sadder story than is true, as a rule, in these days, when often the end of a great racehorse's career is in the stud or perhaps in the hunting stable. Let me tell the life story of such a horse, who, though not in any sense of the word a great racehorse, was a very useful one and one whose career was full of vicissitudes and ended happily.

By whom he was bred and where he was foaled I do not know, but I am sure that his youth was a happy one. His sire was that great horse "Rossington," by "Roscircrucian," and his dam was "Mrs. Lane." To racing men of to-day his dam's name ("Mrs. Lane") may mean nothing, though perhaps there may be some who remember Julian Huff's good bay gelding "Lane Allen," who was out of her, by "Inverness." "Rossington," however, will, I am sure, be remembered by all steeplechase men of that time as the sire of "Good and Plenty," who carried the famous green jacket of the late Thomas Hitchcock to victory in many of the greatest steeplechase stakes of his time, and who was rated as the country's greatest horse through the field.

"Lanette," for that is the name of the subject of this sketch, was sent as a yearling to the Fasig-Tipton sale at Saratoga and was bought in by a well-known ex-steeplechase jockey named Barry, who, mindful of the prowess of his

elder half-brother "Good and Plenty," took him home to his father's farm in Rhode Island with the idea of making him into a steeplechaser. Unluckily, Barry Jun. died, and his dream of becoming an owner-trainer was never realised; but his father kept on the colt in memory of his son and for three years—until the old man's death—"Lanette" had the best care that the little farm could afford. At the dispersal of Mr. Barry's property "Lanette" was bought by the local butcher, who broke him to harness, and for a season he pulled the butcher's delivery cart in a little country village near Newport, R.I., leading an arduous but happy existence, and utterly unmindful of the racing career which should have been his by right of breeding.

One day, Francis Ware, who at that time managed the Newport Horse Show, was told of the horse, and always on the lookout for a bargain, drove over to the butcher's stable, saw "Lanette," and bought him for a song. Ware, who was manager of the New York Horse Exchange, and who knew that I was in the market for hunters on which to mount the hunt servants of the Middlesex, of which I was then master, wrote to me and offered me the horse. His letter is before me now and in it he told me of his purchase and said: "I have recently acquired a bay gelding called 'Lanette,' which might be useful to you as a hunter—he *might* be a good racehorse, for he is by the sire of 'Good and Plenty,' out of that good mare, 'Mrs. Lane.'" He went on to tell me something of his early history and added at the end, "he's a well grown, rather plain, well developed, big horse, with—to quote Kipling—'the head of the gallows tree,' but I think he's got 'the heart of Hell,' which you will remember was another attribute of the horse that the colonel's son rode, and I think you'll like him. You can have him for 300 dollars." I knew that Frank Ware was a very good judge of a horse, and after all, 300 dollars was not very much for a good sound thoroughbred, up to weight; so I wrote and asked him to send the horse on. I remember the day he

arrived well. He was one of the plainest thoroughbreds that I think I've ever seen. My wife and I went down to the stables to see the new arrival, and when she had looked him over she turned to me and said: "Well, anyway, Alex, you and he have got one thing in common; he's got your Roman nose. You ought to get on well together."

We taught him to jump and he took to hunting like a duck to water and carried one of my whippers-in during the two seasons that the Middlesex Foxhounds hunted the Loudoun County country in Virginia. He did his work well and my second whipper-in, David Thornton, a raw-boned Yorkshireman—who also belonged to the "Roman-nosed brigade"—swore by him. "He's a grand horse, zur," he said, "he'll never put me down," and he never did. But, at the end of his second season, after two years' very hard work, he could hardly be called sound, and he was relegated to doing odd jobs in harness at my New England farm. I had, at that time, a stud groom named Tom Wilson, who had been a steeplechase jockey and who also acted as my trainer. Tom used to drive the maids to church on Sundays, always using a hunting crop instead of a driving whip, and I can remember the sight of old "Lanette" in the shafts of a very high cart one Easter Sunday morning; Wilson driving, with the prettiest of the maids beside him. I don't think I should have kept him at all had it not been for Tom's entreaties to give him one more chance. "He'll be quite sound in time, Sir," he said, "he'll win us a race yet." I laughed at him, but he had his way, and in due course, when my string went off to begin their training at the track, "Lanette" went with them, in spite of the fact that he was not absolutely sound.

I did not see my horses for about six weeks, though I had letters from time to time telling me that they were going on well, and always there was mention of "Lanette." Presently they were shipped up to Boston for The Country Club Meeting, and I recollect going over to Brookline where the

ances were held to watch the "schooling" two days before the meeting opened. We had entered all our horses, and yielding to Wilson's entreaties, even "Lanette" had been nominated for two of the steeplechase stakes, one of which, run on the last day of the meeting was over a three and a half mile course. I had planned to ride a little chestnut mare of which I was very fond—named "Consolation"—in this race, and I schooled her myself that morning. She went well enough but unluckily my saddle girth broke coming into one of the fences and I had rather a nasty fall which though it only shook me up a bit, temporarily injured my mare enough to put her out of training for the time being. "Never mind, Sir," said Wilson, "'Lanette' will give you a good ride, he's been schooling very well and he is as sound as a bell of brass." I laughed. "I don't believe it Tom," I said, "he hasn't been sound for two years—but I'll ride him just the same and we'll see what happens."

The Country Club meeting ran two days, and on the first I started "Lanette" in a two and a half mile 'chase called after one of the local hunts, "The Myopia." It was not a very high-class field—they were all hunters—and it was won by Jim Colt's good horse "Vaquero," but what surprised me was that half a mile from the finish I found myself lying in fourth place after a very easy ride. Up to that time I had no idea that my old hunter had any foot at all, but when I shook him up he gained rapidly on the leaders, passed two of them, and was only beaten half a length for first place. I was delighted, but after I had come out from the weighing room I was met by a very disappointed trainer who assured me that if I had made my run a little sooner I should have won. "Never mind, Sir," he said, "two and a half miles isn't far enough for him," but if you ride a decent race day after to-morrow, in The Middlesex, you'll win easy. Mike Daly tells me that Mr. Colt ain't goin' to start 'Vaquero,' and the horse you've got to beat will be that 'Ringlets' mare, from Long Island, what Mr. Fletcher Harper rides. He's stayin'

with you, isn't he, Sir?" "Yes," I answered, "he is, and he thinks he is going to win."

Fletcher Harper, who is now Master of the Orange County Hounds in Virginia, was a classmate of mine; and so it had naturally happened that he was staying with me during the meeting. We talked over our respective chances the night before the race. Fletcher was pretty sure he was going to win, and to be quite candid, I rather agreed with him. He was about the best gentleman rider through the field that we had in those days, and moreover I knew that he had ridden "Ringlets," who was owned by Mrs. Foster Rawlins, in several races and that the mare had been brought up especially to win this race. Naturally, he did not tell me his plans, nor I him; but we joked about it a good deal and I think he was pretty confident. In the paddock before the race, the next day, Wilson told me to lay in behind the pace until we had crossed the Liverpool—as an open ditch is called in America—for the last time, and then make my run on the backstretch; and this was exactly what I did. Four of us came over the Liverpool for the last time, almost together, and then Harper shook up his mare and I went with him, leaving Alfred Devereux on "Sacandaga" and Henry Bell on old "Arlington," to bring up the rear. Coming to the "Gravel Pit" fence behind the clubhouse, Harper and I were side by side. He looked at me and smiled and I smiled back at him. We both knew we were going too fast at the jump, which is the stiffest one in the course; but we were both of us too old hands to let the other get the lead, and we rode at the fence together. My horse blundered and, for a moment, he had me out of the saddle and I thought I was off. But I managed to get back and when I took a look behind me I saw that "Ringlets" was down and that the other two were many lengths behind. After that it was plain sailing. We came down the hill over the water, across the track, and over the last fence, and galloped home an easy winner. Of course Wilson was delighted, and so was I,

except for the fact that I felt, as we jogged back to weigh out, that my poor old hunter was very lame. He never started again.

Just what he did to himself on that day I do not know, but I do know that he ended his days happily, pulling Superintendent Brennan's gig at Aqueduct, where he was eventually buried in the infield of the steeplechase course.

CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE HUNTING FIELD

ALTHOUGH the early English settlers of New England were Puritans of narrow and devout habits, and although the inhabitants of Massachusetts, and particularly of Boston, are still noted for their somewhat ascetic ways of life, there is one custom still prevalent in England which is not commonly followed throughout New England. Christmas in England is regarded and celebrated as a religious festival, while across the water, in that pleasant land where I used to live, it is distinctly a day devoted to sports, pastimes, and jollifications; a day of roast turkey, mince pies, plum pudding and cider, and above all, a day when every dweller in the countryside keeps open house.

Living in England, as I do, I have not been foxhunting on Christmas Day for a good many years, but I recall several good hunts which took place on that day in New England, during the years before the last great war, when I used to have hounds of my own and sometimes hunt over the snow-clad hills not far from the road over which Paul Revere galloped "to spread the alarm to every Middlesex village and farm," on the 18th of April, 1775. Foxhunting, as we know it in England, was a comparatively new thing in the district, though foxhunting in the New England fashion, with one or two slow, deep-mouthed hounds—very similar these to the old-fashioned southern hound—had been followed by the local foxhunters for generations. The Yankee farmer is apt to resent any innovation in sport, particularly if it savours of England and the "red-coats" whom their ancestors had fought at Concord and Lexington about a hundred and fifty years before; and it had taken a good deal of missionary

work on my part to make them understand the sport. I remember particularly one man named John Barton who objected strongly to our crossing his land. He came of an old New England family, and his grandfather had fought the "red-coats" at Concord in '75, and he didn't see why he should allow men wearing those same hated red coats to follow a "pack of dogs" across his ancestral acres. Barton was a difficult man to contend with, and it was not until I accidentally found out that he was in the habit of going to New Brunswick every year after moose and caribou, that I was able to obtain a half-hearted permission from him to cross his farm.

I went up to see him one afternoon, and though, at first, he was obdurate in his refusal to grant me permission, when I finally appealed to his sense of sportsmanship, he weakened.

"Well," he said, "after all, if it's your way of enjoying yourself and getting sport, I suppose it's just as reasonable as it is for me to go to New Brunswick to shoot moose——"

"Particularly," I added laughing, "when I am trying to destroy the foxes who kill your poultry."

"Couldn't you do it better with a gun," he said, "same as Tom Ashe does? He's got two fox dogs and he killed eleven foxes last winter. You've got about fifty dogs, so they tell me. How many did you kill?"

"At least as many as that," I answered. We both laughed. He had by this time become somewhat mellowed by the cider we had drunk together.

"Well," he said, "go ahead and try to kill some of my foxes, and don't knock down too many of my walls." And so we parted.

Sudbury Common was one of our best meets, and the little green in front of the white wooden colonial church, which has stood there since revolutionary days, was dotted with scarlet coats, with a goodly scattering of black ones, and not a few ladies some of them with children, home for

the holidays, on ponies, who were seeing their first Christmas meet. My diary tells me that we found on Moore's Hill and that hounds, getting away close behind their quarry, ran hard across the railway line towards Concord, and then swung right-handed at Nine Acre Corner and crossed the Sudbury marshes, towards Lee's Bridge. The field had to bear well to the left here, as crossing the marshes at that time of year is impossible, but hounds were at fault in Kelly's Wood and we were able to catch up to them just as they hit off the line again and settled to really run over the Burnett meadows, which lie to the south of the Sudbury River. Beyond Burnett's, they were two fields ahead of us, and we saw them streaming past the Bent Farm as we crossed the road and breasted the steep hill which overlooks the Sudbury Vale. Charlie Morris, whose brother Frank still hunts the Cleveland, will remember this day, if ever he sees this, for he was on a little thoroughbred mare called "Borderland" that day, and though it was his first season as whipper-in to my pack, he had already proved himself a brilliant horseman, with that indispensable faculty of getting a view on all possible occasions. Hounds checked near the sand-pit on the south side of the Bent Farm, and it was Morris's keen eye which saw, a field ahead, our fox making straight for the Barton Farm. We had run a complete circle and I had to lift them over the railway again to hit off the line in the meadow beyond. It was no great point, perhaps four miles at most, but I don't remember many more satisfactory endings than when I saw my hounds roll that fox over, not fifty yards from Barton's front door.

When we reached them there was very little left of that fox, and old man Barton was jumping up and down with excitement, and shouting, "Sic 'em! Bite the——" just as he would have cheered on a terrier after a rat. I blooded one or two children, gave the brush to a little girl, and the mask to old Barton. So far as I know, it hangs in his hall to-day; and then—because it was Christmas Day—he went into the

house and returned to the porch followed by his wife and daughters, with plates of hot mince pies and jugs of New England cider, in which we drank each other's healths.

I cannot truthfully say that I remember any other Christmas in the hunting field that was quite so gay as this one, but I have had a good many Christmas Days in the saddle, which were a very pleasurable appetiser to my Christmas dinner.

“FINCASTLE”

CH.G.

By “INVERNESS”—“LOUISA FORREST”

“SURE, SIR,” said my Irish stud groom, “’tis a terrible unsatisfactory game, this horse-showing. I’ve often wondered why ‘The Master’ wouldn’t buy himself a few leppers an’ go out on the grass where the man stands with the little red flag. An’ when he says ‘Go’ an’ the flag falls an’ ye’re off through the field, ’tis a grand game that; an’ whin ye come in first, ye know ye’ve won, an’ it ain’t some damn’ fool’s opinion, that like as not ain’t half so good as yer own. ’Tis a better game, that is ! ”

So spoke Tom Wilson as he took my horse from me at the gate of the show ring where we had just been competing in a class for “Qualified Hunters,” in which we had been awarded third prize. I was perfectly satisfied, but my groom, to whom all our hunters seemed quite perfect, was bitterly disappointed that the ribbon that decorated the bridle of the horse I rode was yellow and not blue.

“Well, Tom,” I said, “there’s a lot in what you say. Maybe we can find a likely prospect among the shipment that Mr. Colt has at Hamilton. He wrote me the other day and asked me to come and look them over; I’ll ride over there after luncheon.”

And so it happened that a few hours later I found myself shaking hands with Harry Colt—sportsman and Hon. Secy. of the Genesee Valley Hounds—who had the reputation of having the best hunters for sale that were to be found in America. Colt’s brother, Jim, was a big racing man and he invariably bought a good many young horses at the yearling sales, keeping the more promising ones for himself, and

turning the others over to his younger brother to "make" and dispose of afterward as hunters. I told Harry Colt that I wanted a couple of hunters, and then voiced Wilson's desire for a likely steeplechase prospect, if he had anything that might possibly develop along those lines.

"Of course," I said, "what I'm after is hunters and I can't pay fancy prices, but if——"

Colt laughed. "What you want, Higginson," he answered, "is a racehorse for the price of a hunter, isn't it?" I nodded. "Well, I think I've got just what you want. I've got a chestnut four-year-old that my brother Jim thought very well of as a two-year-old, but he had an accident and couldn't stand training, so he sent him to me. I had him out at pasture all last season, and then we taught him to jump this spring—he's a grand jumper—and he might make a really good horse next season. I'll show him to you." He called to his stud groom, "bring out 'Fincastle,'" he said.

He was not prepossessing at first glance. He had lop-ears and a yew neck, and he was terribly straight on his pasterns; but when one came to look him over; one realised that he had grand quarters and was well ribbed up, and had—what I always look for first in a horse—beautiful sloping shoulders that mean that a man has a lot in front of him when he's in the saddle. I asked Colt to have him saddled, and together he and I rode out over a lovely pasture that stretched beyond the farm at which he had stabled his horses. Presently we came to a bit of exceptionally sound going, with a few low stone walls stretching across it.

"Let him gallop," said my companion. "Ride him over anything you like—at any pace you like—he'll jump anything."

I took him at his word, and for the next ten or fifteen minutes I took the four-year-old over the fences at varying paces. He jumped perfectly; took everything in his stride; and for a youngster, I thought him about as nice a prospect as man could wish for. Of course, it was quite impossible

to even guess whether he had speed enough for a racehorse; but he was a thoroughbred—and royally bred, at that—and I decided, even before I got back to the stable, that if I could afford it, I would have him. I asked Colt his price.

"Well," he said, "I've never sold a horse to you, Higginson, and I'd like to. He stands me about a thousand dollars—and you can have him for that price."

"I'll take him," I answered, "and if you've got another horse that I can use in the Hunt stable, at a moderate figure, I'll buy him too."

He showed me several and I found one among them that served my purpose well for many a long year. But to go back to "Fincastle." I hunted him that autumn and had several very good days on him—notably one in Virginia, when I got him as second horse in the middle of one of the best hunts we had that season; and when spring came, I put him into training. He took to the steeplechase game kindly and schooled well; though neither Wilson nor I thought that he was good enough to start at the big tracks. But in the autumn I sent a few horses to Montreal, where the Montreal Hunt took over the "Blue Bonnets" racecourse from the Montreal Jockey Club for a three-day amateur meeting. I had entered "Fincastle" and another hunter in a three-mile steeplechase for the Montreal Hunt Cup, which had been opened to all comers for the first time in its long history—for it had been competed for annually since 1842—and when I was lucky enough to win on "Fincastle" in another shorter race on the first day, I felt that, at any rate, I had a chance. The race for the cup was two days later, and we got away to a good start; but three miles is a longish distance, and I deemed it wiser to take my horse back of the pace for the first turn of the field, and let the lightweights—we were carrying eleven stone ten—go on in front. They went on all right and as we passed the stand at the end of the first round, the leaders were thirty lengths in front of me. Coming in to the open ditch in front of the clubhouse,

"Fincastle" made a bad bobble and nearly had me out of the saddle—in fact I did lose one of my irons—but he recovered himself cleverly, and so temperate was he that it was an easy matter for me to ride him with one hand and reach down with the other and put the light iron on my foot before the next fence was reached. At the head of the backstretch we had still a mile to go. The two leaders, "Stalker" and "Heatherbell," were now forty lengths in front of us, and it seemed almost impossible that we could catch them before the finish was reached. But I shook up my horse and he gained rapidly. On the turn at the lower end of the backstretch we drew level with "Stalker," and as the two horses rose to the fence, I knew that we should land in front of him. My horse sailed over like a bird and landed running, and by the time we came into the last fence, he was at "Heatherbell's" girths. In all the steeplechases I've ridden, I don't think I ever knew a horse to take off so far in front of a fence, and get over safely. Our rival tried it that day, and Murray Hendrie, who was on her, never knew what had happened for three hours. She took off at the same time and landed in the middle of the fence—and we galloped home an easy winner. They "do" one very well in Montreal, and the master and Sir Montague Allan, who presented the cup to me in the judge's stand, filled it to the brim with "The Wine of France," as a friend of mine calls it, and they all drank my health and old "Fincastle's" that evening, at the big dinner that followed.

But that was not "Fincastle's" greatest victory; for a year later, we discovered that he was really a racehorse fit to compete with the best in the land. It was at Toronto; I had come up to see the initial running of the Hendrie Memorial Steeplechase, run over the Woodbine track; and since I had entered my horse, "Sir Wooster" (who was at that time rated the best steeplechaser on the American continent), I felt sure of winning. My trainer that season was a genial Southerner named Gwyn Tompkins, who after-

ward trained the great "Man O' War" for Sam Riddle, and when he met me at the railway station, the first thing I asked him was whether he thought we should win.

"Yes," he said, "we certainly ought to—by the way, I'm starting 'Fincastle' too."

"What for?" I asked. "Surely he's outclassed in a stake like that!"

"Well," he answered, "I think so too, but Sobel, the boy who rode him when he won last week, begged so hard to be allowed to ride him, that I thought I'd better give him a chance."

That afternoon, when the horses went to the post, my stake horse, "Sir Wooster," led the procession; and with odds at even money, he looked a good thing. The flag fell and they were off, "Sir Wooster" galloping easily in front of his field, until he came to the fence in front of the clubhouse. There Allen, who rode him, was a little too confident. He didn't steady his horse coming into the fence, and though he jumped all right, he made a bad landing and lost his rider—and with it (I thought) my chances of winning the cup. Disgusted, I turned my back on the race and walked over to where my trainer stood, at the top of the stand.

"Damn that boy," I said, "careless idiot, and I came up here to see this!"

Tompkins said nothing; he was watching the race, his glasses glued to his eyes. The horses were at the head of the backstretch. Suddenly he turned to me.

"Can that chestnut hunter of yours stay?" he asked. "Look at him run!"

I turned and watched the horses as they sped down the far side of the field. "Fincastle" had come from behind; passed the rest of the field, and was overhauling the leaders. As I looked, the horses came round the lower turn and headed for home.

"Can he stay?" Tompkins asked again; and I, remembering his race for the Montreal Hunt Cup a year before, when

I had ridden him, replied, "Yes, he can stay all night, but——"

"Then we'll win yet. Look at him come; he's passed 'Thistledale'; there's only 'Braggadoccio' left. He's gaining; he's outjumped him; if he can only stay now!"

Nat Ray on "Braggadoccio" was riding like a demon; but little Sobel on my hunter just sat still, and the good horse gave him all he had—and just won, by a short head. The stand went wild with excitement, and when Sobel and I went to the royal box to receive the cup from the Governor-General of Canada, the crowd was generous in its applause—even if the coveted cup did go over the border.

That was "Fincastle's" last race, for he retired from racing after that, though he carried me to hounds for many years after.

MRS. JONES'S DUCK

HOUNDS had met at North Perrott that morning, and because it was a popular meet in the Cattistock country, there were a great many people out, in spite of the fact that it had been a cold night and that there was a bit of a bone in the ground. We found our first fox in Crundle Hill, but he was a ringer and we didn't get much of a hunt before he got to ground in an open earth in the Somersetshire Holts—that impregnable wilderness which Squire Farquharson mentions with such scorn in some of his early diaries. For once, Matravers Gorse failed to hold and Wethams Bushes held only a vixen from which hounds had to be stopped. The day was getting on and we had had no really good hunt, and though the field were too good sportsmen to grumble openly, the feeling of disappointment began to manifest itself and people began to drop out and go home. No one who has not been a master realises quite the feeling of responsibility for the day's sport which one is bound to have. Of course it cannot be helped if foxes are not to be found or if those that are found are crooked-necked ones, and I don't think that the master is usually held responsible, but still the feeling does prevail, and I was beginning to worry a bit, when one of the best of our Cattistock sporting farmers, Mr. Jones, rode up beside me.

"Master," he said, "draw the little covert that lies between Pendomer Rectory and my farm. My wife has been losing a lot of poultry lately and she asked me to tell you that she hoped you could catch the marauder."

"I will," I answered, "but don't you think he's more likely to be lying in Kit Hill covert? However, it's all on the way; I'll draw it certainly."

I dislike very much giving a huntsman orders about his

movements in the field when hunting hounds. I have always held that it is quite unfair to a good man to hamper him with instructions; for, after all, since he is responsible for the sport, he ought to be allowed to do it himself. However, I do sometimes make an exception by telling a huntsman what covert to draw next, and in this case I rode over to Holland and repeated Mr. Jones's suggestion to him. He sniffed scornfully.

"That Mrs. Jones's," he said, "she's always making suggestions and always complaining about the loss of her poultry. We'll never find anything in that Rectory covert."

"Never mind," I said, "never mind. Jones is an important farmer. It won't take five minutes and we'll draw it on the way to Kit Hill. We'll probably find there."

Holland touched his cap. "Very good, Sir," he answered. He called to his first whipper-in. "Jack," he said, "slip round the Rectory covert and keep an eye on the bottom end. I'm going to draw it. You'll just about have time to get around before I put hounds in."

To make a long story short, there was a fox in the Rectory covert; for hounds had hardly been inside for two minutes when we heard Jack holloa away from the far side, and those of us who had gone on saw "Mr. Charles" as he went away over the road for East Coker. Holland had his hounds on the line in a moment and they went away down the Hardington Vale at a pace that tailed the field in the next mile or two. Just short of East Coker village they swung to the right over the railway line, and leaving Sutton Bingham behind them, passed close to Closworth Church, where the big open ditch near the rectory took its toll of the field. On past Holt Mill drove the pack heading for Melbury, but turning left-handed over the road and into Eighteen Acres, where we had our first check. There was a fresh fox afoot here and had it not been for the quick eye of our first whipper-in, who saw him as he left the covert and saw that it was not the hunted one, and rated hounds back, we should

have lost more time. I think that Holland must have had divine intuition that day, for neither then, nor in the half-hour that followed, did he make any mistakes. He simply held his hounds on; hit off the line near Chetnole Withy-bed, and blew them away on the far side as they swung left-handed across the Great Western Railway towards Yetminster. Ten minutes more took us out of our own country into the Blackmore Vale, and we had nearly reached the village of Yetminster when we heard a welcome holloa. Our pilot had been heading straight for the railway station, where he had been turned back by some platelayers who were working on the line. It was one of these who had holloaed, and gave Holland the chance that he wanted to save a valuable two or three minutes. Picking up his hounds, the little huntsman held them on to the spot indicated by our informant.

"He's just gone into that withy-bed," he shouted, pointing to some willows near the line, "and he's dead beat."

"All right, thank you," said the huntsman. "Yut, yut, yut," ending as they began to feather, with a cheer, as "Chaplet" opened.

Hounds flew to her; dashed into the covert; and we heard the unmistakable snarl as they killed. Holland was off his horse in a minute and into the covert himself, whence he emerged with "Mrs. Jones's fox." Among those of us who saw the end were Farmer Jones and his small boy, who was about sixteen at the time—he's in H.M. Forces now, for this all happened several years ago. I spied them watching Holland as he broke up his fox, and knowing that the youngster would like to have something to remind him of such a good hunt, I took the brush from Holland and gave it to him. He thanked me, and his father, looking very pleased, said:

"I told you you'd find in that covert, Master. My wife will be very pleased." There was a twinkle in his eye as he

made this last remark, which aroused a suspicion in my mind, and as we rode home, I called Jones over and said:

"You were very sure there was a fox in that covert this morning, Mr. Jones. Had you any reason to be?"

He laughed. "Well," he answered, "I knew we'd have a good field out and I didn't want you to be disappointed, so last night, when everybody had gone to bed, I went out to the fowl-house and caught one of my wife's ducks and then I tethered it down in that covert and left it to spend the night there. It was quacking something awful when I left, but there wasn't no noise this morning—only a few feathers—and I thought maybe that fox would lay up nearby. 'Twas an old drake anyway," he added, laughing, "and I wanted the boy to have a hunt. He don't know anything about it—nor his mother neither! Thank you for a very good day, Sir."

TWO LABOUR DAYS

THE CLOCK on my mantelpiece struck eight. I turned on my radio and the voice of the broadcaster came over the air—"This is Monday the seventh of September. Here is the eight o'clock news and this is Bruce Belfridge reading it."

Monday the seventh of September—in America we should have said "Monday, September seventh." It is Labour Day I said to myself, Labour Day, and I am in England, and we are at war. If I were at home I'd be in Lincoln, perhaps I'd be going to the races at Concord—what fun we used to have forty years ago—I wonder if they hold those races still, I guess not, Ben Brown must be dead, and Tom McGann, that gallant sporting blacksmith who followed the Middlesex Hounds to Virginia when they had their memorable match with Harry Smith in 1905. I wonder how many people there are alive who remember those days. Johnny Bowditch does, I'll be bound. He used often to be there.

I turned off my radio—they call it a *wireless* here in England—and went back to sleep and dreamed of those bygone days. And because the dream was a very clear one, and because I'm rather lonely this morning, I'm writing to tell some of my fellow countrymen something of those early days at the little meeting which was fostered by the local branch of The Knights of Columbus, and the Middlesex Hunt, and held at the local track at Concord, Massachusetts, U.S.A. I don't think there was another village in New England where the sport of foxhunting with its attendant adjuncts like races for local hunters, was so popular. Father Toomey, preaching from the pulpit of the Roman Catholic Church in the historic New England village, used to advise members of his flock on the Sunday preceding Labour Day to patronise the races at the local track "where ye can see

good clean sport," and if one could judge from the attendance his words fell on fertile soil. Before the Middlesex Hounds began to hunt the country, the races, which were always held on Labour Day, were given for trotting horses, but thanks to the influence wielded by Tom McGann, of whom I have already spoken, and Ben Brown—a dyed-in-the-wool sportsman if ever there was one—who, although he was more used to the procedure of the trotting track with its customary deciding of any stakes by two out of three "heats," nevertheless presided over flat races and even steeplechases which were run under the rules of the National Hunt and Steeplechase Association.

On that particular Labour Day of which I am thinking I remember that my father, who was always interested in my sport, was staying with me; and he and I went together to Concord to watch the races. It was before the days of automobiles and we drove there in a break that was drawn by four polo-ponies. The "Old Man" sat on the box-seat with me, and from it he viewed the day's racing except during the "Grand Steeplechase" (as it was called) when he was invited into the stand by Ben Brown, who as usual was the presiding judge. It was a lovely autumn day, and as we neared the old colonial village it seemed to us that "all roads led to Concord," for we met countless vehicles of every make and description, full of holidaymakers all *en route* for the "Track." The horses that were to enter in the various races had gone some hours before in charge of my stud-groom Tom Wilson, himself an ex-steeplechase jockey, and on our arrival we found him comfortably installed in an old barn with his charges and an army of small boys whom he had enlisted as "stable-helpers" for the day. In another building nearby were Dick Barrett's string, and just as we came in, John Bowditch's horses arrived from Framingham, some ten miles away.

This morning I looked up in my old diary my entry regarding the day's happenings, and I could if need be, tell

the story of every race—of its little incidents, even down to the finish, when old Brown announced, in his nasal New England twang, that “The heat and the race were won by Mr. Bowditch’s bay filly, ‘Imp. Sweet Kathleen.’” I don’t think old Brown knew that “Imp.” stood for imported, and he never could get over the habit of talking about “heats.” Apparently I won a race on a little bay gelding I owned at that time, called “Gwyn,” which I remember as having purchased from “Courty” Smith a few months before, during a visit to him at his farm outside Alexandria Virginia; but the event of the day was evidently the “Grand Steeplechase,” for a cup given by McGann. The local paper described the race as follows:


“Three starters faced the flag; two old reliables—Mr. Barrett’s ‘Sporting Parson’ and Mr. Higginson’s ‘All’s Well,’ and against these Mr. Chamberlain had sent out ‘Warlock,’ who gave the others many pounds because of his breeding and former winnings. ‘All’s Well,’ ridden by her owner, took the lead, with Wilson on ‘Warlock’ in second place and Mr. Barrett on ‘Sporting Parson’ bringing up the rear. This order was maintained until the last jump was crossed, when Mr. Barrett, who had ridden a very clever race, came with a rush on ‘The Parson’ and caught Mr. Higginson on ‘All’s Well’ napping. It was a driving finish up the stretch, with only inches separating the horses at the finish; but ‘The Parson’ won by a nose, with ‘All’s Well’ second and ‘Warlock’ third.”

I seem to have reversed the decision in the last race, for “Kumshaw” had no difficulty in beating Mr. Barrett’s “Wild Wave” in another race which was over a mile and a half on the flat. Altogether, the little meeting was a great success, and as oldtimers remember, it was little meetings of this sort which finally led to the establishment of the Hunts Committee, which still controls Point-to-Point racing in America to-day. That Labour Day is memorable to me for many reasons; not the least of which was the night that

followed it; for it was on that night—or rather early the next morning—that I started from my stables at Lincoln at 2 o'clock and rode thirty-eight miles to the Myopia kennels, arriving there in time to have a morning with the Myopia Hounds; breakfast with Mrs. Tom Pierce; ride back to Lincoln—on a fresh horse, of course,—and hunt with my own pack that afternoon.

What days those were! And how different conditions are to-day. There have been times when England did not understand America and *vice versa*. Now, thank God, those times are past. We are in this war together, both striving for the same end, both closer in our aims and ideals than we have been for years. All our little differences are very trivial and of no real importance. All are forgotten in the universal aim. They can't lick the two of us—to say nothing of our gallant ally the Soviet Republic.

And when the war is over and peace is restored to our world we can stand up and drink our "*Vale Vulpes*" together, whether we hunt with American or English foxhounds.



A GAMBLE IN BINDER-TWINE

IN these days when the Atlantic Ocean lies between me and the people I know best and the hunting countries of the United States where I spent so many happy years in the days of my youth, it is pleasant to turn to the pages of *The Middieburg Chronicle* and read of the sporting events which are going on, and often to see photographs of my old friends on the illustrated pages of the admirable paper which has sprung into existence since I crossed the "pond" fifteen years ago, for a winter's visit to the land where my wife and I seem to have settled. It is pleasant too to see hanging on the walls of my library the pictures which bring back to my memory the men who will always be identified with sport in America, Plunket Stewart, Watson Webb, Foxy Keene, John Valentine, Jimmy Appleton, Antelo Devereux and a dozen others, among whom there is no better sportsman than my old friend "Brose" Clark, who is almost as well known on British racecourses as he is at Belmont Park. I don't know why it was, but this afternoon when I was looking at the admirable portrait of "Brose" that hangs in the library, an incident of an afternoon spent with him in the Myopia country in Essex County, Massachusetts, came to my mind and thinking that it may be of interest to all hunting men, I am writing it down. I call it "A Gamble in Binder-twine," but in spite of its title it is a story which deals with horses and not with agriculture.

It happened nearly thirty years ago, when I used to live and hunt my hounds (the Middlesex) from my own kennels in South Lincoln, about thirty miles as the crow flies from the Myopia Kennels at Hamilton, Massachusetts. One morning "Brose" who had been spending the night in

Boston, motored out to see me—I can see him now rolling up in a great yellow-wheeled car—and during the course of conversation he said to me:

“Hig, Dave Waller has brought up a consignment of hunters from Virginia, and he’s got ’em stabled at Hamilton. We might motor down and see ’em. What do you say?”

I didn’t want any hunters, but it was always interesting to see any new lot that Waller brought up from Virginia, and I fell in gladly with his suggestion that we motor down after lunch; so we telephoned to be sure that we should find him in and started off at two o’clock. The Massachusetts roads are good and about three o’clock we arrived at a farm in the little village of Hamilton where Waller had hired suitable accommodation for his horses. He met us at the door with that jovial welcome that was always one of his best assets in disposing of anything he had to offer.

“I’m glad you came, Mr. Clark,” he said, “you and Mr. Higginson are my first visitors, and I’m glad you should see ’em all—I only arrived here yesterday and my horses are looking a bit rough, but they’re a grand lot—the best I ever brought up, and no one has even seen them yet.”

“Good lot, are they, Dave?” said Clark, “good jumpers?”

“Yes, Mr. Clark, they are—they can jump anything in this country, or any other for that matter.”

“Can they jump wire, Dave?” Waller looked surprised.

“No, Mr. Clark,” he said, “you wouldn’t expect that, would you?”

“Well,” said my companion, “all mine can, and what’s more I’ll bet yours can too.”

“Now, Mr. Clark,” said Waller, “you’re pulling my leg—I couldn’t ask them to do that.”

“Dave,” said Clark, “I’ll tell you what I’ll do—you say *your* horses can’t jump wire, but I’ll bet they can, and what’s more, I’ll bet you *I* can ride ’em over wire, or something

very like it, and get 'em over clean. Have you got any binder-twine here?"

"Why, I don't know," said the Virginian, "I guess the farmer that owns this barn has got some, he's got a reaper and binder here, I'll go and ask him. But what do you want that for?"

"Never mind," came the answer, "you go and ask him and I'll show you."

Waller disappeared and presently he returned with a big ball of the desired article which he handed to Clark.

"Now then, Waller," said the Long Island sportsman, "you tell your man to saddle your nags, one by one, and let me ride 'em at a single strand of binder-twine held by you and Higginson at three feet high and I'll bet they will all jump it."

Waller began to laugh—"What'll you bet?" he said, "I know they won't jump it, they'll just run through it, but if you want to spend your money I'll give you five dollars for every one that jumps it, if you'll give me five for every one that runs through it."

Clark, who had been unwinding the twine, laughed. "You're on," he said. "Tell your man to bring 'em out. Don't let him hold it up over three feet," he said to me, "we'll go out into the field and try 'em out. You'd better make a bet with him, Alex, you'll make a pot of money."

But I was unconvinced. "Thank you," I said, "I'm not betting."

Waller and I went to a little field behind the house, where there was a bit of level going, and standing about thirty feet apart, we held the twine at a height of approximately three feet.

"That's right," said Brose, "that ought to do finely. Where are your horses, Dave?"

"Here comes one of 'em now," said the Virginian. "This is a grand jumper. He might do the trick, but I don't think any of the rest will."

The coloured boy led out a very nice type of half-bred hunter—not the high-strung clean-bred animal that I should have expected to see in Waller's string—but very much the type of an old man's confidential hunter. Clark looked at him, disapprovingly.

"Hardly your type, Dave," he said, "might do for some greenhorn. Who did you bring him up here for?" The dealer laughed.

"Now, that would be telling, Mr. Clark," he said, "though I did bring him up with one certain man in view. Lovely mouth and manners he's got. Get up on him. You'll see." Clark adjusted the stirrups to his length, and mounting, walked the horse over to where we stood with the taut line between us, and breasted the string.

"Got to show it to him," he said.

He took him back some thirty or forty yards; cantered up to the obstacle; and the horse popped over easily, never touching it.

"That's one to you, sir," said Waller, "but here comes another that won't give you such a quiet ride, though he's a good jumper, mind you. This is a half-brother of 'Grandpa.' Ought to be a great steeplechasing prospect. He might go well in your string, Mr. Higginson. I could sell him to you quite reasonably."

"Has he started often?" I asked.

"Never through the field," came the answer. "I got him from Canada."

"Where," said I, laughing, "he started four times and ran in the ruck. His name is 'Sir Bedivere,' isn't it?"

"Why, yes," said Waller. "I believe he did." We all laughed.

"Sir Bedivere" was a rangy chestnut gelding and a bit high-strung and nervous, but Clark, after getting up on him, brought him quietly up to the twine so that his chest rested against it, and then rode him back. Waller looked at me.

"Mind your fingers," he said. "This one will run through it."

"Brose" had turned his horse and was cantering towards us at a steady pace. When he came to the obstacle, to Waller's utter astonishment, and, I must confess, to mine, he did not run through it. He stood away and flew it as if it had been a steeplechase fence. Waller looked chagrined. "Well, I'm damned!" he said.

"Two to me," said "Brose." "Bring 'em on, Waller. Maybe I'll buy a horse from you, when I'm through."

And so they came, one after another, and, believe it or not, there was only one out of the seventeen which "Brose" rode that afternoon which failed to jump the string—and jump it clean. Waller paid up like the sportsman he is, and if I remember rightly, "Brose" bought a horse from him. I know *I* did—and a thundering good horse it was—as any one who remembers "The Ace of Clubs" in the hunting field can testify. He never put me down once in all the years I had him, and he won two or three races into the bargain.

I remember that a few days after that I told this story to Charlie Morris, who was my kennel huntsman at that time, and also to my studgroom, with the result that we had all the Middlesex horses out at Lincoln and tried the same test on them. They all went clean. It takes a good deal of nerve to ride a hunter at naked wire. I never had but one horse that I could trust every time. She was a little bay mare called "Trouble"—trotting-bred, I think. I know they used to call her "the buggy horse" in my stable. She must have had very good eyesight. It was not even necessary to ride her up to the fence first and put the wire against her chest—the only safe way. She just took them in her stride, like any other obstacle.

There was one horse, owned by Captain Peter Halswell, of the Scots Greys, who used to come out regularly with the Cattistock, who could do just that same thing, but he is the

only one I ever saw do it on this side of the water; though in Australia and New Zealand, I am told it is a common occurrence.

Be that as it may, it is a very pleasant memory to look back on that day in the Myopia country, when "Brose" and Waller and I had our "gamble in binder-twine."

FOXHUNTING AND THE WAR

IT WAS during the early years of the last great war, before the United States had joined the Allies, that I had the honour to preside at a dinner which was given at the Riding Club of New York by the Masters of Foxhounds Association of America, in honour of Sir Charles Gunning, at that time head of the British Remount Commission in America. Sir Charles, who had been Master of the Woodland Pytchley, had judged at the hound show, which was that year held at the old Madison Square Garden. I remember there was talk at that time that the future of foxhunting in England was in jeopardy, and the masters of Foxhounds of America voted to help in preserving the best blood of the breed by caring for no less than two hundred and fifty couples of hounds, should it be deemed wise to ship them to the U.S.A. during the duration of hostilities. As a matter of fact the necessity for this action never arose. The feeling in England at that time that the national sport of hunting must be preserved at any cost was very strong, and thanks to the support of many influential members of the government the danger of wholesale destruction was averted although many packs were given up and others reduced by more than half.

In these days when England's sportsmen are at the front, fighting gallantly as they always have, it seems to me very unfair to attempt to rob them of the joy of looking forward in the future to the pursuit of that sport which is an integral part of that England which they have always known and for the preservation of which they are fighting. And yet only the other day I heard one man remark that he could not understand how any one could go out foxhunting when there was so much other work to be done, and that he had

no patience with those who upheld such practices. I might add that he was *not* a hunting man.

It seems to me that such remarks are not only most unfair, but also detrimental to the morale of the men—aye and women too—who have given and are giving everything they possess—"their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honour"—to defeat those forces of evil which are trying to enslave the civilised world.

Some eight or ten years ago, when I had the Cattistock Hounds, I remember one day noticing a lady, a stranger in the field, who attracted my attention by the way she went when hounds ran. She was a middle-aged grey-haired woman, beautifully turned out and well mounted. While we were drawing she was never in any one's way, but when hounds ran—well, there was many a younger woman or man too for that matter, who couldn't stay with her. Later in the day I asked to be presented to her, and when I heard her name—Miss Maude Wynter—my mind at once flashed back to that dinner in New York of which I have spoken, and the poem on the back of the menu which ran as follows:

There's a Vale for which I'm sighing,
I can see its fences still
And my thoughts go backward flying
With the pack to Golden Hill.
I can hear that welcome holloa;
"G-O-N-E AWAY—He's broke at last."
Hear the thundering hoofs that follow
As I ride into the past.

Memories, bitter sweet come thronging
As I pace the prison ground
And my heart is sick with longing
For a sight of horse and hound.
But however drear the days be,
Fair or foul, or rain, or shine,

Not the Fates themselves can rob me
Of those hunts which once were mine.

Pause a moment, oh, my brothers
Who at home so glibly prate
How you hope to see Foxhunting
Soon abolished by the State.
We have fought for you, and gladly,
Would you now requite us thus?
Kill the sport we love so madly?
Think what hunting means to us.

For the sake of those who're absent
For the sake of those who're gone
All those gallant cheery comrades
Who once rallied to the horn;
For the youngster, true to breeding,
Longing soon the game to learn—
Hear us Soldier Exiles pleading
Keep it up till we return.

"Did you write that poem about the 'Exiled Foxhunter,' which was published in *Horse and Hound* during the last war?" I asked.

"Yes, Mr. Higginson, I wrote it, and I know that you quoted it on the menu of your American M.F.H. Association dinner in New York, for one of my friends was there and told me of it—in fact he sent me the menu. I wrote that poem," she said, "because I felt deeply the injustice done to the men who loved foxhunting, by those who had never known it."

And what she said to me then—what she felt—is true to-day. Once hunting is stopped it will be difficult to get it started again. It must not stop. The British Government—many of them at any rate—know this; but there are those who seize on this chance to decry the sport which has helped

to make the men of the British nation what they are to-day, and to deprive them of it would be a terrible mistake as well as a great injustice to those men who are fighting in order that England—the England they know and love—may be preserved.

But there is another side to the matter—

“All work and no play—makes Jack a dull boy”—there’s no truer saying. Let me tell you something of an experience I had a few days ago in the country in which I hunt, with a pack which has the whole-hearted support of the farmers who till the land and raise the crops that are so necessary to the nation. The master has been in the service—but is at present at home invalided out because of the effects of a disease contracted during the first world war—He rang me up on the telephone one morning and said, “I can’t get out to-morrow, Alex, but I’ve told Will what to draw and I wanted to tell you about certain people who are coming out, because I want you to look after them specially.”

“Right,” I answered, “tell me who they are and I’ll do what I can.”

“Well,” he went on, “there are about forty of them, and——”

“Good lord,” I said, “where in heaven’s name did they get horses?”

“They’re not on horses,” he answered, “they’re soldiers—on foot, they want to run with hounds. Their captain rang me up—he’s a chap I used to know—and asked if he might bring his training squad over, and let ’em follow hounds instead of hiking on the road—damn’ good idea, don’t you think? Of course I said ‘yes,’ and I told him to look you up. He’ll meet you at——” and he rang off.

The next morning hounds met at half-past ten on a lovely village green, and as we approached the spot I saw, drawn up at the roadside, a small detachment of soldiers with a captain at their head. He came up and saluted and told me, what I already knew, that he had talked with the

master, and that he hoped I didn't mind him bringing his men out. "It's far better training for them," he said, "than running on the road, and moreover it teaches them to get across country and to learn something of the topography of the land. Just tell me which general direction you're going to draw and we'll try and keep in touch with you; and not bother hounds either," he added laughing.

"You'll not bother us," I said, "I only hope we can give you a good hunt."

Our first draw was productive of a short-running fox which as luck would have it soon went to ground, though he did give our guests a short burst over three fields, and it was great fun to see them getting over rough thorn-crested banks in their eagerness to get to the head. It was just a pipe-opener for them, and I must say I was more anxious to see hounds find that day than I had been for a good while, for I wanted to see how Captain ——'s scheme would work out if hounds really ran.

Well—about quarter-past one they did really find a good fox. I heard our new whipper-in, whose husband is serving somewhere in the Middle East, holloa away, and I must say it did my heart good when we got out of covert to see hounds streaming over the open with Will close beside them, and the "field" nicely bunched not far behind. They had got a good start. If we had spent an hour instructing that fox how we wanted him to run, and where, we couldn't have done better. Over the meadows, past H——, across the railway line and into the neighbouring hunt's country they raced and while we on horses had to make a bit of a detour to get over the railway line, the military were able to steer a straighter course and were close up when hounds checked about a mile and a half from the covert in which they had found. In fact they got there before we did.

I wish that all mounted fields were as well-behaved as those men were. They didn't mill about as I've often seen

the field do at a check. They didn't chatter (they were too blown for that), they just stood still, and (I think) prayed that hounds wouldn't hit off the line too soon, before they got their second wind. If they did, their prayers were not answered, for hounds hit off the line almost at once and went away in a great left-handed circle back toward the covert. If they had run on I fear the field would have been outdistanced and the end—which was a most spectacular one—would have never come off. But the Goddess of the Chase was with us that day, for the fox, who had been hustled hard during the first burst, thought he could evade his pursuers by staying in covert and he led them up and down that wood for fifteen minutes, giving "the troops" time to come straggling up, and then he broke—so close to them that the chorus of holloas that went up, must have frightened him, for he swung left-handed and faced the open with the pack close at his brush and was rolled over two fields further on in sight of every one.

I wish my readers could have seen these men coming over that last field. It was like the finish of a steeplechase to see them crossing the last obstacle and the sergeant to whom I gave the brush put on a burst for the last hundred yards that would have done credit to Battleship. In fact it was not unlike Battleship's finish in the Grand National a few years ago. As I said, the brush went to the leading sergeant, but if my readers think the rest of the field were satisfied with that ceremony they are mistaken. They *all* wanted a bit of that fox, and Will had to cut off little bits of fur from every part of the quarry which hounds left. But they were all finally satisfied and went away happy—happier I think than they have been for some time.

Stop foxhunting? It must never be done.

CUBHUNTING IN WAR-TIME

THE TERRIER sleeping on the foot of my bed stirred uneasily and growled.

"Quiet, Lion," I murmured, and pulled the covers over my head. The growl was repeated, and then the lights went on and I realised that someone had come into my room.

"What is it, John," I muttered, "an air-raid?"

"No, sir," came the answer, "You told me to call you at half-past five, sir, and it is after that now. You're hunting to-day, sir. The horses are ordered for six o'clock."

I had an intense desire to countermand the horses and tell my man to go away again—one always has that desire at the beginning of the cubhunting season; but I smothered a curse and reached out my hand for the cup of hot coffee which was by my bed, knowing that that would put new life into me. It did, and half an hour later I was on my horse and on the way to the meet. I call it a "meet" more out of courtesy than anything else, for there are no meets in the cubbing season, and no regular fixtures in these days anyway. Hounds are out for "business purposes" only—not for sport. We must help the farmers who have so loyally preserved foxes for us in the days when foxhunting was followed for sport alone, and when we hoped for a good hunt even more than for "blood." Things are different now; foxes *must* be kept down, if hounds are to justify their existence, and the enemies of foxhunting must have no chance of asking questions in the House of Commons.

My road led north—away from the sea-coast, away from that bit of country which to-day is guarded by the soldiers of the King, where we once hunted the fox in the good old days before the wild beast of Europe threatened this pleasant land. As we jogged along the road which led toward the

hills I looked back toward the sea over the rolling downs where the heather is just beginning to show in great patches of deep purple, and wondered how long it would be before we galloped over their slopes again behind a pack of hounds. In the distance I heard the drone of an aeroplane, and looking skyward saw the Dawn Patrol winging over the countryside keeping watch lest some marauding Nazi raider made an attempt to machine-gun the cattle in the fields, or the men toiling early and late to gather the harvest that is to help England to win the war. There is a mighty harvest in England this year, and fields that have lain idle for many seasons are yielding great crops of wheat and oats and barley, which must be safely garnered and stored away.

On the high ground which overlooks the broad expanse of downs which stretch in every direction, there is a small searchlight emplacement, and as we approached the entrance to the little camp which is manned each night, I saw a fox steal across the road. He was in no hurry, and apparently had no fear of the troops which had invaded his domain. "Lucky beast," I thought to myself, "you've no war to trouble you." A mile further on we passed a little farmstead nestling in the valley, and here everything looked the same in spite of the fact that there was a great encampment which covered the hillsides beyond. It was odd to see the downs covered with tents, for the troops were still under canvas, camouflaged in every conceivable colour and blending with the soft browns and greens of the downs on which they nestled. We turned up a lane which led close by the encampment which lay on our left, and I noted as we rode along that the rabbits which live in the hedges were not in the least disturbed by their military visitors—they scuttled across the lane just as they always have. The camp was fully awake and one saw squads of men doing their morning "setting up exercises" outside the tents, or hurrying to their breakfasts.

Half a mile further on, standing near the edge of a

covert, I came on an officer who was evidently listening to something. He saluted as I rode up, and said:

"Good-morning, sir, wonderful morning, isn't it? Perhaps you can tell me where hounds are this morning? I heard they were meeting near here, and I thought I heard them a moment ago."

"Yes," I answered, "very likely you did, they should be close by somewhere. I know they planned to draw Dole's Wood, about three-quarters of a mile beyond here, and they're sure to find there quickly."

We stood there listening, and sure enough presently we heard the faint sound of a horn, and then the huntsman cheering his pack into covert. Suddenly there came the single note of a hound, and then another and another, and then—the shrill *holloa* of a whipper-in, as the pack broke into full cry and the glad sound came down the wind. The officer's face broke into a radiant smile.

"God," he said, "that's good to hear—that's the best sound I've heard since the war began. They sound as if they were coming this way. Can't we get on some high ground and catch sight of them?"

"There's a gate just beyond this covert," I said. "We can turn left there and get up on a little rise of ground, they're almost certain to swing this way—here—catch hold of my stirrup leather."

Together we hurried up the hill and there as I had hoped we caught sight of the pack driving toward us, huntsman and whipper-in close at their heels and a few riders strung out behind them. They were running in the valley below us, and as we looked they swung toward the little wood we had just left.

"Watch out," I said, "the chances are that cub will try the earths in the covert below us, and if they're stopped, as they're sure to be, he might break near here—aye—here he comes." A beaten cub showed outside the covert's edge for an instant and seeing us, dodged back again.

"Tallo-ho—b-a-i-c-k," shouted my companion; "just in there, huntsman," he pointed with his stick to the edge of the covert.

Hounds came out, the cry stopped, and they swung back. There was a worrying snarl and a snap, and then the unmistakable sound that comes when hounds kill.

"They've got him, sir," said the huntsman, dismounting. He turned to the officer, "Would you hold my horse a minute, sir?" He went into the covert and came out a minute later with what was left of the bedraggled cub.

"Whoo-whoop," he cheered. "Whoo-whoop little bitches, break him up."

The little field that was out came up, three ladies, half a dozen children, a couple of old men. The huntsman was old and grey—well past military age. He looked as if he might have seen service in the last great war, and saluted as he took his horse from the officer who was holding him near by.

"Thank you, Sir," he said. "Our first cub this season, Sir."

"Is your master with the forces?" the visitor asked.

"He is, sir—Captain Medfield, Sir—Second Battalion Blankshire Guards."

"When you report to him," the soldier said, "please present Major Baily's compliments, and tell him I've enjoyed this morning more than any day's hunting I can remember—and I've seen a great many seasons," he added.

The huntsman saluted again. "I hope we may see you out often, Sir," he said, and calling his hounds he moved off to draw again.

Well—we had a good morning. Cubs were plenty in that part of the country, and the pack accounted for a leash before they were ordered home. We had one nice gallop too, with a few little bits of timber that made one feel that hunting had really begun again, and when hounds rolled their last fox over at the end of the morning, I know that one man

at any rate was glad that his regiment was encamped in a hunting country.

As I rode home that day in the brilliant sunshine it seemed inconceivable that the war was going on, but still more inconceivable that any man should dare to think he could conquer a nation who boasted such light-hearted sportsmen as my officer friend of that morning.

A LEASH OF CUBS—AND A HUN

IN these days foxhunting is carried on—if it is carried on at all—for “business purposes,” and the tally is a very important, perhaps the most important, part of the day’s work. The men who are in charge of many of the local packs are old men, like the writer, who have been at the game for many years, and who perhaps have seen their best days. Such men aren’t wanted by the War Office, although most of them are doing their bit in that organisation known as the Home Guard, which the Nazi Press have honoured by threatening to treat as *franc-tireurs*, and given short shrift, if they are caught when the much-advertised invasion of England takes place. Not many days ago, a certain pack, which shall be nameless for reasons which must be self-evident, met one morning near a hamlet which is half-hidden in a little valley not far from the sea coast of England, where, in happier days, one was wont to watch famous yachts from overseas racing against the best that England could produce. I never attend a meet amid the thatched cottages that cluster around the manor without recalling one really great day when we hunted over the neighbouring hills behind one of the best provincial packs in England; and I shall always recall the gay throng of scarlet-coated followers who rode behind the master-huntsman, who is now away on active service, doing his best to defend the land which we all love.

The fields are small in these days—as I have said, hounds are out for business purposes—but I think, if it had been given to us to see the game we should be hunting before the day was out, there would have been more people on hand to greet the huntsman when he rode up with fifteen and a half couple of hounds, looking fit and ready to run for their

lives, despite the war-time rations which prevail in the kennels. Three ladies there were, and half a dozen children on shaggy ponies, and four old men who turned out more to help the hunt staff than for any hope of getting sport—though none of us are averse to a gallop, if by any chance, hounds get away and run. The owner of the manor was away on duty, but his wife was out and a couple of his youngsters, and they guided the huntsman to a nearby covert, where, they assured him, he would find without delay, “for,” said they, “he has taken seven of mother’s fowls in broad daylight, and the feathers are all outside the mouth of his earth; but we stopped him out last night—William was up at three o’clock—so he must be about.”

He was “about.” Hounds found in short order and the marauder, who was surfeited with his night’s plunder, was killed as he slept in the nearby gorses. That was first fox that morning, and the next one—a cub, from all appearances—who had not yet learnt the way to take care of himself when hounds were about—yielded his brush after a short burst. Our luck seemed to have ended there, for, although hounds found another cub, he was made of sterner stuff, or else he was wiser, and they were never able to stick to his line after he left the gorse patch which sheltered him. We had met at eight o’clock and scent, which had been excellent for the first hour, seemed to vanish as the sun mounted higher and warmed the atmosphere. Hounds began to get a bit slack, and two or three farmers who had joined us, and who had work to do, were turning back, when suddenly, away to the south, we heard a faint hum which grew and grew until it filled the air and seemed to far exceed the usual familiar drone of the war-planes to which we are all accustomed in these days. We listened, and from the direction of the sea, we heard the sound of distant firing; and then, through a gap in the clouds, we caught a glimpse of the raiders far far up, flying in a perfect formation, with their attendant squad of fighters above them. As we looked, we

saw the British fighters from the nearby aerodrome coming after them; saw the white puffs from the shells of the anti-aircraft batteries stationed on the hills about us, and saw one plane suddenly burst into a blinding flash of light, as some missile struck his bomb-rack and exploded the bombs which he had hoped to drop on the good people of England. Out from the flash appeared an empty parachute, which drifted slowly off in the faint breeze. The battle moved a little toward the north but continued fiercely, and one could see the British planes weaving in and out among their more numerous, but apparently less easily manœuvred enemies.

Hounds were working diligently in the gorses, but save the huntsman and whipper-in no one was paying much attention to them. Suddenly, we saw a Nazi plane stagger and drop toward the earth, apparently directly above us. It turned over and over as it fell and crashed in a field about half a mile off. We watched it fascinated, and saw it strike the earth and scatter into a thousand pieces; and as we watched, we became aware that there was a parachute coming down not far from the spot where it had struck. The huntsman saw it too; ceased hunting hounds; and taking his horse by the head, rode straight at the intervening fence, toward the spot where the parachute looked like coming to earth. It was a big fence, but his horse seemed to realise the importance of negotiating it safely, and sailed over without any hesitation. Half-way across the next field was a member of the local Home Guard, making the best time he could towards the fallen German, who was disentangling himself from his parachute. Our huntsman galloped up to the running man, "Give me your rifle, Bill," he said, "I can get there quicker than you can," he held out his hand. The man handed him the rifle without hesitation, and the huntsman let out a yell and rode straight at the German.

I shall always wonder what that Boche airman thought when he saw a scarlet-coated "cavalryman" riding at him full tilt yelling like a Comanche Indian. Hounds had got

their heads up at the "View Holloa" and were piling over the wall behind. It must have been a queer sight. I wonder what he thought; but I know what he did. Up went his hands high above his head, and when the other members of the Home Guard and the field came up, there sat our huntsman with his captured airman quite subdued. The Home Guard made him prisoner and took him off to the nearest farmhouse, whence he was conveyed to police headquarters at the county town, some ten miles away, by the wife of a distinguished general, who was in the field that day—on his feet. Our huntsman went on, and presently hounds killed another cub, and so he was able to say to a villager who asked him what he had caught that morning:

"A leash of cubs, Jim—and a Hun."

THE FOX THAT LIVED ON THE GOLF LINKS

DORCHESTER, the county town of Dorsetshire, is a flourishing centre. Its two principal inns can hardly be called up-to-date hostelries, but they possess plenty of old-world charm which more than makes up for their lack of modernity, and one never passes the door of the Judge Jeffreys tavern without calling to mind the grim days of the old jurist's "Bloody Assizes," which were held in the court-house across the road. The Dorset County Club, which has its quarters on High West Street, was founded in 1882; but it was more than twenty years later before the need of a golf club was felt by those pioneer devotees of the "royal and ancient game," who longed for the chance to pit their skill against each other.

Just who was responsible for the laying out and construction of the links I do not know; but to-day there is an excellent course on land owned by Lady Christian Martin, which forms part of that great property surrounding Came House, which lies between the borough of Dorchester and the city of Weymouth on the sea coast. The Came Down Golf Club, as it is called, possesses a very pretty course where one can always be sure, on a hot summer's day, of a cool breeze from Weymouth Harbour which lies below. In winter it is sometimes a bit bleak on the hills, and it was on one of these cold winter days that a little knot of enthusiastic followers of the South Dorset Foxhounds were gathered in the hope of getting a gallop which would send the blood coursing through their numbed fingers and toes. There were not more than ten of us out that morning, and we were doomed to disappointment, for although there were foxes in the gorses near the third green, they had no intention of facing the driving snow which whitened the land-

scape and balled in the horses' feet. It was a dreary morning, and I think every one was glad when the master at last gave the signal for home.

"We'll come back again in a day or two," he said, "and see if we can't kill some of these foxes. The secretary told me the other day that the cubs steal all the lost golf balls."

"What do you mean?" I asked. "They're not good to eat." He laughed.

"Well," he said, "I don't know what they want them for unless it's to play with; but all I can tell you is that when we dug out a fox here one day we found eleven golf balls in the earth, and the caddies tell me that they find the remains of them chewed up outside the earths often during the summer; and that being the case," he went on, "we'll have to come here again very soon. I'm putting on a bye-day from Stafford Green on Saturday. If it's a decent day, we might come here after we're through with the other coverts."

And so it happened that three days later, after we had had a useful but somewhat uninspiring morning with these same hounds, the master said, "Well, now suppose we go to the golf links and see what can be done there to make up for that bad day earlier in the week."

In these war-time days, the South Dorset Hunt is honoured by the services of a very pretty amateur whipper-in. Miss Peggy Phillips has a voice that would be the envy of many a professional; she rides like a centaur; and moreover she is not only ornamental but most useful and knows her business as well—aye better—than many a man who advertises for the position of first whipper-in in that sterling publication, *Horse and Hound*. Hounds were being hunted, on the day of which I am writing, by the master, Captain C. M. Wellesley-Wesley, and Will Jackson, the professional first whipper-in and kennel huntsman, was the third member of the hunt staff. The field comprised a couple of officers of His Majesty's forces, home on leave from France: two

ladies, two or three farmers, a couple of children and the writer; and some of us had been out on the day previously described. We had had a fair morning, but hounds had accounted for no foxes; and in these days the killing of foxes is of the utmost importance; for it is not only honour which must be satisfied, but the farmers of the district and the Ministry of Agriculture, as well.

Hounds were jogged down parallel with the fairway which runs from the second to the third hole, and thrown into the gorse just back of the third green, where two staid members of the golf club were trying to hole out.

"Leu in there," carolled the master. "Yoi push 'im up; try for him." Hounds dashed into the gorse, while I, sitting outside on my horse, watched one silently profane old gentleman miss an easy putt, to the amusement of his opponent. I couldn't hear what he said, but I saw his lips move convulsively and I'm sure he was cursing hounds, master, foxes and everything to do with foxhunting. His opponent smiled patronisingly and addressed his ball; and then he too suffered what might be termed a set-back, for just as he was about to make his putt, a hound spoke inside the gorse, not twenty yards from the edge of the green, and the master's encouraging cheer rang out.

"Yoi, wind him, old dog. Hark to Bradman. Push 'im up, Bradman."

This time I heard what the golfer said, "Bradman indeed," he muttered, "does he think this is a cricket match? Damn these hounds anyway." I didn't have time to see whether he missed his putt or not, for just then Miss Phillips's "Tally-ho over" brought us to the far side of the gorse, just in time to see hounds chop their fox on the edge of the open down. The master was off his horse in a moment, but he didn't even have time to take the trophies of the chase from the pack, before there came a holloa from Jackson, who was stationed on the edge of the gorse above the third tee, which is on a little rise of ground thirty yards from the green

where the two old gentlemen had holed out. Hounds flew to the holloa and by the time we had galloped to the edge of the gorse, they were chivvying their fox about inside it. On the tee below us one of the golfers was about to drive off; his ball was teed up; and he was addressing it in the most orthodox manner.

Now I am not a golf player. I have been known to play "at" the game, but the good lady who bears my name tells me that it is a trial to play with me, though she does it occasionally. Nevertheless, I watched that golfer with great interest, because I know well how easy it is to drive into the gorses from that tee, if one is flustered. Hounds were speaking inside the gorse and it cannot have been easy to drive; but one could tell from the sound of the impact of the club that it was a good drive, and it was with an air of smug satisfaction that the man who had driven off first watched his opponent as he teed up *his* ball. I was watching him too, and so I did not see the fox which broke from the gorse and ran almost between my horse's legs, until he was upon me. The master galloped by me with some profane remark about men who watched golfers instead of being on the look-out for foxes; and then we all settled down to ride behind the pack, which forced that fox in a big left-handed circle, across the fairway, and over the boundary fence into a farmstead beyond. For the next ten minutes we had a merry gallop over the open grass fields which lie beyond the links, but our pilot must have had a fondness for golf, for he re-entered the club property near the eleventh hole, and running across the green, he made his way over the fairway which stretches down to the next hole nearly four hundred yards away. Luckily, there is a strip of waste land parallel with the fairway, and along this the field galloped, as hounds crossed the road into Came Wood and left the golf links behind them. There were quite a few people on the links at the time, and I could imagine the sigh of relief that must have gone up as the hunt swept out of sight. I can

imagine, too, the curses of protest which must have arisen, when, not ten minutes later, that golf-loving fox recrossed the road. Entering the course at the seventeenth hole, he ran above the club house, scattering the caddies of a competing foursome who cheered us as we galloped past, and crossing the boundary fence again swung left-handed for Bincombe Down.

We were through with the golf course at last—and I think the master was as pleased to be safe away from the danger of flying golf balls as the golfers were to get rid of hounds and galloping horses. Hounds crossed the road and swung right-handed as though to invade the neighbouring Cattistock country, but the pilot turned back from the Weymouth Road and running over the top of the Great Western Railway tunnel sank the hilley beyond and headed for Sutton Poynts. Scent which had been a bit catchy seemed to improve at this point, and hounds were driving on behind a very weary fox whose point was evidently the main earth near Bincombe; but I think he must have realised that he would never be able to reach it, for on the edge of the moor he turned back, and hounds were able to earn their reward at the end of a very fast hunt of just over forty minutes.

And that is the story of the Fox that lived on the Came Down Links.

THE CAPTAIN TAKES A HOLIDAY

HAD GONE to bed early and was just dozing off when the telephone by my bed began to ring. I let it go on for a few minutes because I was sleepy and did not want to be disturbed; but the sound became so insistent that at last I overcame my drowsiness and picked up the receiver. The voice of the hunstman of the local hounds came to me over the wire.

"I hope I didn't disturb you, sir, but I've just had a wire to say that the captain has got a day's leave, and he's coming down by motor car in the morning and wants to get a day's hunting. We had expected to go to Lychetts and that is a bad country and we want a good day; so I've arranged to meet at the golf club at 10.30 to-morrow morning if you can manage to mount us, sir. We're a bit short of horses and the captain will be hunting hounds himself; so if you can mount Miss Peggy and me here——?"

"Of course I can," I answered. "Come Down Golf Club at 10.30, eh? That's grand. I'll be there and bring on a couple of horses. Good-night."

"So Mike has got a day off," I said to myself. "Well, I hope he gets a good one." I got my stud groom on the telephone and told him we would need three horses in the morning; and then, at last, I went off to sleep.

The morning dawned clear and quiet. I say "dawned" advisedly, because although I am not accustomed to getting up with the sun, with summer time now continued during the winter months, daylight comes little before eight o'clock. There had been a frost during the night, but the ground was not hard and the going perfectly good, except on the slippery tarmac roads, which necessitated careful handling of our over-fresh horses until we got on the grass. In these days,

some of the members of the hunt in whose country I live, have arranged to share the mounting of the hunt staff between them, providing horses for huntsman and whippers-in at those fixtures which are in their vicinity—a good idea in these times of rigid economy in all matters pertaining to sport.

“The captain,” as our master is familiarly known to every one, is a retired army officer, who, though he saw service at the end of the great war, is still young enough to be called to active service again; and though he gets home occasionally, the hunting of the pack of which he has been master for five seasons, usually devolves on his kennel huntsman, who, with the aid of an amateur whipper-in, shows those of us who are on the home front, excellent sport.

At the golf club, now used as the headquarters of the unit billeted in the village, a small but enthusiastic field had gathered—a sporting farmer or two, a few children, and the local jobmaster, a well-known character who ekes out his shrunken income by supplying hunters for such army officers as can find time to steal a day’s sport. They tell me that “Mr. Barnes” has been in the country for many years, and that he was once a jockey of considerable repute; though to see him now—he must weigh easily sixteen stone—it seems hardly possible. As I rode up I noted that he was leading a spare horse, a likely-looking bay gelding that I had seen out several times during the season.

“Good-morning, Master,” he said to me—he still calls me “Master,” as in the old days when I used to hunt the neighbouring pack, and I love him for it—“the captain asked me to bring a horse on for a friend of his who is stopping with him. This one should suit him well. You saw him carry Colonel Blacker the other day, when hounds ran over the road into the Cattistock country. Just the sort you used to like, Sir, in the old days; I wish you had those hounds now.”

I laughed, "Oh, well, Mr. Barnes," I said, "we old uns have to stop sometime you know, and I like to get my sport with this pack nowadays. They're all very nice to me and it's a pleasure to see such a beautiful pack of hounds at work. The captain is hunting them to-day, I believe. Ah, here he is, and hounds too. I hope he has a good hunt; he doesn't get many these days."

The master was in his scarlet, and as he got out of his motor, I saw that his guest, a retired M.F.H. like myself—had put aside his khaki for the day and had turned out in "regulation rat-catcher," if one may use such an expression. The hound van was close behind the master's car and the hunt servants—Will, the huntsman who had disturbed my slumbers of the evening before, and "Miss Peggy," as she is known to the local field, a most charming and attractive young woman, whose skill as a whipper-in would make many a professional jealous—got out and mounted my spare horses. The master mounted his favourite grey, and then with hounds frolicking gaily about, the little cavalcade moved toward the gorses.

The Came Down Golf Club is never without a fox, and hounds had not been drawing for many minutes, before there came a holloa from the master's guest and we were away. He did not want to run, that first fox, for he turned back when he came to the boundary road that separates the home country from Cattistock territory, and to our consternation chose to run the railway line. There was a train coming, but these country engine-drivers are sportsmen, and even as he approached the pack, I could hear the grind of brakes as he brought his train to a standstill until hounds could be called off the line; and then, with a cheery wave of his hand he started his locomotive again. Hounds were safe, but *that* hunt was over, and the master very wisely jogged his pack back to Bincombe Heath, where hounds ate an unwary poultry thief, who was sleeping off his night's debauch in the gorses. And *then* came the hunt of the day.

They found their fox in Came Wood, and after a turn around the big covert, he broke across the Broadmayne Road and swung left-handed over the golf links, as if for the sea. Hounds had a good start; the field had a good start; and in an instant all the disappointment of the morning were forgotten. To the left, and far below us, lay the sea, shimmering in the sunlight; nearby, the little coast town which had already felt the weight of Hitler's bombers; but for the moment, war was forgotten, as we galloped in the wake of the flying pack heading straight for the Cattistock country. The tarmac road which marks the boundary between the two hunts lay only half a mile in front. The master turned in his saddle, caught his huntsman's eye, and said:

"Better get on to the road, Will; there'll be a lot of traffic there this morning, and we don't want any accidents."

Will was on a little horse of mine that rejoices in the name of "Bonnie Dundee," as game a little nag as I've ever owned, and at the word he galloped off at a tangent and managed to reach the main road just as hounds approached it. There was, as the master had anticipated, a steady stream of motor vehicles of all sorts—military lorries, private cars and dispatch-riders—going toward the coast; but they stopped when Will held up his hand and watched, as first hounds and then the field, crossed the slippery surface, jumped the low stone wall, and then settled down to really run on the far side.

The master turned to me. "Now you know where you are, Hig," he said, "this is your old country."

Yes, it was my old country—not only that, but the part of my old country that I loved the best—the Friday country, where there is never a strand of wire, and clean stone walls separate the sound pastures. What days I've had there! Why, I remember—but I must not stop to reminisce, nor had I time on the occasion of which I write, for the captain's bitches were driving on at a pace which left me no time for dawdling. On past the Upwey Wishing Well, across the

Martinstown Road, and then, settling down again, they swung right-handed for Ashton Gorse, where they had marked a fox to ground earlier in the season. But this pilot was made of sterner stuff than the one who had sought and found shelter in the main earths on that occasion; for he took hounds straight on for Bronkham; drove through the thick gorses at a pace that tailed the field a bit; and headed for Venicky Wood. On the hill above Bronkham stands the monument that old Admiral Hardy, Nelson's fleet captain, built for himself in the brave old days when England's navy defied the invader, as it does to-day—a landmark that can be seen for miles around. As we neared its base, hounds swung right-handed away from the coast, and skirting Pen Barn Gorse, headed for Martinstown, where I looked for their quarry to seek shelter in the gorses on Hog Hill. But he evidently thought otherwise, for bearing right-handed until they were heading for the sea again, hounds pushed on and eventually marked the pilot to ground just above Friar Waddon. For the last mile the fox had been viewed frequently, and had we been in our home country, where the earths were stopped, he would never have lived to tell the tale. The master was close at the heels of his pack when they clustered around that earth in the bank above the tiny village. The huntsman, who, on the days when his master is hunting hounds, acts as his whipper-in, was there too, and "Miss Peggy," on my seventeen-hand horse, "Record", and the visiting ex-master, and we all enjoyed every minute of it. A five and a half mile point, and double that, as hounds ran.

"*Oh, mark him,*" sang Will to the hounds, "*Oh, mark him.*" An odd cheer, and one that is heard but seldom—where had I heard it? I thought a moment and then I remembered another day, many years ago, when I hunted with the Squire of Itton, and heard him cheer his famous White Pack, when they marked a fox in the Welsh hills, after a hunt which I shall never forget. Yes, that was the cheer of

old Sir Edward Curre, master-breeder, now gone to the land where there's never a blank day. That was the cheer *his* huntsman used, and his huntsman was John Jackson, the father of Will Jackson, who is the captain's huntsman to-day!

And so hounds came home, and the master got into his car and drove back to camp to dream of his day's sport and of the future when England will be at peace again and we shall all follow hounds, as in the days before the war.

OLD MEN AND MAIDENS

THE other evening I was dozing peacefully in my chair at the end of a busy day, when the telephone rang. I picked up the receiver and the voice of Miss Debenham, the junior-joint-honorary-secretary of the South Dorset Hunt, came to me over the wire.

"Will has got the chicken-pox—no, *pox*, not *fox*," she said. "He can't hunt hounds to-morrow, and they are supposed to meet here at eleven o'clock. Would you be an angel and hunt them for us?"

"Well," I answered, "I haven't hunted hounds for five years and I don't know the bit of country you're hunting in to-morrow, and I don't know the hounds, and they don't know me, but——"

"Oh, please do, Mr. Higginson; we shan't be able to hunt if you don't. Father will mount you and Peggy will turn hounds to you and somebody will guide you."

"All right," I said. "What time and where? At your house? All right, I'll be there, and tell your father not to worry about mounting me; I'll send a couple of my own horses over."

I hung up the receiver and went back to my chair and sat there gazing at my old horns, which stood in a row on my mantelpiece. I don't use them nowadays and there they stand, day after day, dreaming, as I do sometimes, of the great hunts that we have seen. There are nine of them—the first horn I ever had at Middlesex more than forty years ago; the horn that Charlie McNeill gave me that was once carried by Tom Firr—that could tell many a tale—and the horn that I won in the match against Major Wadsworth's hounds at "The Garden" in New York—and the one that

Jack Grant gave me—they've all got a story to tell. And as I sat there looking at them, it seemed to me that they began to shake with excitement and talk to each other.

"Did you hear?" one of them said. "The master's going to hunt hounds again. Which one of us do you suppose he'll take?"

One of them stepped boldly out—an old battered copper horn. "He'll take me," it said. "He'll take me because he's going to wear a white collar again. You Britishers—it looked with scorn on the horns that had come from Cattistock—" "never saw him wear a white collar; but he carried me on many a hunt in New England and I went on the famous 'Snow Day' hunt at Millbrook, and he wore a white collar that day. He'll take me."

I woke with a start. The horns were all there on the mantelpiece looking the same as ever. Was it my imagination, or did the old Middlesex horn seem a little out of line? I don't know, but I took it down from the mantelpiece and that was the horn which I had in the front of my coat when I started for Glanvilles Wootton in the morning.

Spring comes early in England and The Piddle Valley and begun to show green. I even saw a couple of primroses in a warm place under a hedge, near Duntish Gate; and when I turned in at the manor house and drew up at Mrs. Debenham's door, I saw that her spring garden was already far advanced and the snowdrops, crocuses and daffodils were in bloom. Spring had come to Dorset. Mr. Debenham greeted me at the door.

"The hounds will be very late," he said, "the van has broken down again and Peggy telephoned me that George Dennis had volunteered to bring them over in his horse-box. He is a most obliging chap, that man; but they'll be an hour late; so do come in and keep warm."

And so, for an hour, we sat in Mr. Debenham's cosy "den," where the five cairn terriers were curled up in front

of the fire, and talked about hunting and the great hunts of the past, and a little about the war which was playing such havoc with the sport. The field, which consisted, as the title of this tale indicates, of old men and maidens,—there were two old men and three maidens—put their horses in the stable and we all sat about the fire until the hounds arrived.

Jackson had sent twelve and a half couples of hounds on for me, and when they were let out of the van and found that there was no one save a broken-down American master—and an old one at that—to hunt them, they looked rather disgusted; but they were too civil to say so and followed me meekly to the first covert to be drawn, which I believe is called “Wootton Wood.” Mr. Debenham had meant to draw a vile bit of country called “The Warries,” but since we were over an hour late, he had, at my request, left it out, and I put hounds into the covert already mentioned. They drew well for me and did not appear too much shocked at the noises that came from my voice. In due course they found a fox, which came out of covert, looked at my fair whipper-in, and turned back into covert again. Just why he should have done that I don’t know, because Miss Peggy is by no means difficult to look at; But these South Dorset foxes seem to have little judgment and this particular one traversed the swampy going in the covert and came out on the far side, where my stud groom, who was out on my second horse, holloaed him away. When I had the Cattistock, that same stud groom used to act as a spare whipper-in if anybody was hurt, and he has a lovely “holloa.” Hounds flew to it and my old horn fairly jumped out of its case, so that I could blow them away. They settled to the line and away we went, through a little covert that rejoices in the name of “Twisting Alders,” and then into the open towards the Debenham’s house, whence we had started. Scent was good and they drove on right-handed round Duntish Hill and into a little fir plantation near the top.

There the pack split, part of them going back towards the original covert and the others swinging left-handed. With my horn and my voice I entreated them to get together, but the South Dorset bitches are a hot-headed self-willed lot of "ladies," and they took their time about it, while I sat on my old horse on top of the hill and swore quite softly to myself. My stud groom had informed me that the fox (he described him as "my fox," though the sequel proved him wrong) had run down the hill and passed along Wootton Wood towards the open, and finally I persuaded hounds to come out of the covert, and cast them ahead of me along the grassland. They hit off the line, and again away we went. Hounds were running well together and giving lots of tongue, and from what occurred later, I feel sure that several of the older and wiser ones said to the others, "This feller who's hunting us isn't such a damn' fool after all; he knew where that fox went and showed us."

We ran on round the hill and then bore half-left across a nice bit of going till we got to some plough, where hounds were at fault for a minute; but this time, when I wanted them, they came quickly; cast themselves well, and went on again on the grass, where, unluckily, Miss Peggy and I were unable to follow them because of some wire. For the next mile or so, they went on alone and one or two of the field, who managed to nick in, told me that they hunted beautifully, on towards Chesilbourne, over a nice line of country. Miss Peggy and I, attended by one of the maidens, got up to them as they swung right-handed towards Alton Pancras and checked in a farmyard close to the road. The farmer told me that my fox was only just ahead of me and when I cheered them over the road, I had great hopes of handling him. But luck was against me; they checked in the sheep-stained pastures on top of the hill, and though they kept on trying, the best result I could achieve was that the surmise that he had taken refuge in

an open earth was correct. It was not a great hunt but it was a pleasant day's sport, and I hope the old men and maidens who were out had as much pleasure out of it as the broken-down old American master and his horn did.

THE STORY
OF CLEMENT TORY FOX

IT WAS a cold raw day in February of 1940, and the north-east wind swept across the Dorset Downs, chilling even Charles Tory Fox as he wended his way towards his earth at Higher Burton. Mrs. Fox met him at the mouth of the earth. She was a sprightly young vixen—his second wife as a matter of fact, his first home having been broken up by an untoward accident culminating in the death of the first Mrs. Fox.

"I've sad news for you, my dear," Mr. Fox said, "very sad news. Our friend and benefactor, Clement Tory, has died. I just came by the church at Piddlehinton and watched from a distance the mourners as they lowered him into his last resting place. The hunt servants were there in scarlet and the bier was borne from the church by four Dorset farmers in their black coats and hunting-caps. It was a very impressive sight. I wish you could have come with me."

The vixen cast down her eyes. "You know, Charles," she said, "I cannot go out in company just now. I'm expecting a family." She blushed to the tip of her black snout.

There were four cubs born to Mr. and Mrs. Fox that spring, and one of them was named in honour of the dead sportsman who had always been such a friend to South Dorset foxes—Clement Tory Fox. He was a gay young blade and, like all his namesake, a good sportsman; always preferring to give the South Dorset a run for their money, when they came to Higher Burton Farm, and not taking unfair advantage of hounds by slipping at once into one of

the unstopped earths with which the country abounded. For, in these war-time days, when all the menfolk who could be spared from the farms had enlisted in His Majesty's forces, there were few left who had the necessary knowledge to carry out the usual stopping.

Much of the land which had, in former years, belonged to Clement Tory had been sold, and sold to a man who knew nothing and cared less about the sport of foxhunting, which has helped so much to breed the race of Englishmen who are now fighting for their country and for the betterment of the entire world. The new owner had little regard for the comfort of the vulpine race, and would have destroyed them all with the same ruthlessness with which the Axis dictators seek to destroy those nations which are not subservient to their will. Moreover, with eggs rationed, poultry-keepers were much more careful to pen their birds up properly at night, and Clement Tory Fox found it very difficult to provide for his family, which was born in due course. The gamekeepers, who in the old days had often passed him by with a smile and perhaps a "View Holloa," now took pot shots at him and three families of his acquaintance were even gassed out of their homes, after the manner of that race which had conquered the black men in Ethiopia.

With the coming of the new season, in the autumn of 1941, our hero learned from overhearing the conversation between two farmers who were hacking home from market, that hounds would not begin to hunt until a month later than usual. Much of the land which had hitherto been used for grazing had been ploughed up and laid down the previous spring to corn, and the great crops of oats and wheat and barley that the virgin soil had yielded had to be gathered before hunting began. The autumn of 1941 was a mild one and the lambing season was a little earlier than usual, so that by the end of November there were many flocks pastured on the Downs, which had been augmented by the coming of a younger generation. Now, Charles Tory Fox

the Elder, had always told his children that, while poultry was fair game to be seized whenever the chance afforded, the killing of young lambs was quite a different matter and was practised only by those outlaws of the vulpine race who might be compared to Hitler or Mussolini. Clement Fox had of course been brought up strictly along these lines, but, as he said to his wife, "times have changed, and if I can get hold of a nice tender lamb for you and the children, what harm is there in it? Only the weak ones are available and I am told that in the Axis countries the weak ones are put down anyway. I'm going to have a try for some of Mr. Mayo's lambs near Pigeon House. The boys tell me there are a good many twins among the lambs there, and twins are apt to be weak and easily killed."

A few days later he brought home part of a lamb which he shared with his vixen, and though at first she was afraid to eat it, once she had tasted the luscious meat, all her scruples vanished and she joined her mate in further depredations on the nearby flocks.

Algy Mayo was angry and he sent word to the South Dorset master that "some damn' fox" had been "playing hell" with his lambs and he wanted him killed. Hounds met at Pigeon House two days later; found the marauder at once, and nearly ended his career of crime in a kale field; luckily for him, scent was not good that day and he managed to get on to some fallow land, and gained enough on his pursuers to give him a start which enabled him to reach the earth of one of his cousins, who lived some miles away in the Cattistock country, where the laws of foxhunting forbade the South Dorset huntsman to dig him out. Clement went home to his wife and bragged that hounds would never take his measure.

Ten days later, after a stormy night when it had been impossible to do any marauding and the evening had been spent in his warm cosy earth, Clement decided to raid the Tory flock, and told his wife of his decision. It was in vain

that she protested, "You've never killed any of the Tory lambs," she said, "your namesake was always a good friend to us, and you have always told me that 'a good fox never kills sheep near home.' You'll rue it if you break your rule. Try scavenging around some of these military camps; there's always food to be found there." Her husband's fur stood upright along his back, and his lip curled in indignation. "Am I a wolf," he said, "to steal dead food? I'll kill my own," and he left the earth.

Hounds had had a busy morning, but as the huntsman had feared, scent was not too good, for constantly recurring showers had not been conducive to good hunting conditions. About one o'clock, however, the clouds cleared away; the sun came out; and the cold north-east wind shifted to a gentle southerly zephyr which promised better things. When they were cheered into Wolfeton Clump, the pack dashed in with hackles up and that air which huntsmen know so well gives promise of a quick find. Almost at once there came a holloa from the far end, and those of us who were in a position to see watched a vixen as she ran down a hedge and popped into a nearby earth a quarter of a mile away. It was disappointing, for we had not had a good hunt yet, and hounds and field wanted a gallop. Hounds quickly marked at the earth where the vixen had gone to ground, and the huntsman was just considering the chances of bolting her when there came a "Tally-ho back" from the whipper-in who had stayed behind to rate tail-hounds out of covert. In a minute the huntsman was on his horse again; hounds were going to the holloa; and three minutes later we were all galloping hell-for-leather behind the flying pack, which had settled to the line and were racing to the north. I galloped up beside the whipper-in who had holloaed the quarry away.

"A big dog-fox this time," she said, for the whipper-in was a girl, a sister to the famous "Miss Peggy," of whom I

have so often spoken in former stories of the South Dorset Hounds. "Looks like going this fox does."


We galloped on; skirted Incombe; and crossed the Boundary Road a mile further on into the Cattistock country, where our pilot, who evidently knew where he was going, headed straight for the gorses above Nethercerne. There used to be a main earth above the village there, but Clement Fox—for it was he—scorned to take advantage of its shelter; for he ran straight down the Cerne Valley, over the lovely country I knew so well, to Asylum Gorse, which lies close to Charminster, and then, swinging left-handed, headed again for his home at Higher Burton. Hounds came on, running with their heads up and sterns down, with the small field strung out in the rear; for scent was good and they had gone a terrific pace. They recrossed the Boundary Road behind an army lorry—which had stopped for some reason or other, and had just started on again—and checked on the far side. We were a bit behind them here, and when I got up to the huntsman he was casting hounds on the Downs beyond. No luck; they failed to hit off the line; and though Will spent fifteen minutes making a most masterly cast, it was all to no avail. He turned to me chagrined.

"We've lost him again, Sir," he said, "I'm afraid it's no use." Reluctantly I gave the order for home. Clement Tory Fox had made good his boast!

The bar in the Bear Inn was full of soldiers, who were listening to the nine o'clock news when Will Jackson came in for his glass of beer. He was a great favourite with the men who were billeted in the neighbourhood, for they knew that only physical disability prevented him from being one of them, and they were always glad to yarn with him in the winter evenings. That night a sergeant whom he did not know came up to him as he entered and said, "They tell me you're the huntsman of the South Dorset, and know a

lot about foxes. Now I would like to ask you a question. I come from London and I don't know nothing about them. Are they fit to eat?" There was a roar of laughter from the other men in the room and Will said, "No, I don't think they are; though hounds seem to like 'em. Why do you ask?"

"Well," said the sergeant, "we were coming down the main road in a lorry some five miles away from here about two o'clock to-day when we see a fox—very tired and bedraggled he was—crossing the road. He tried to get out of the way, but he couldn't and we killed him. We always pick up anything we run down on the road—rabbits and hares and chickens and the like—and take 'em home to eat; and I jumped down and picked this feller up and took him back to the cook and told him to roast him for supper. He wouldn't; said he wasn't fit to eat; but he pulled his tail off and told me I'd better give it to you. Here it is." And from his pocket he produced the brush of Clement Tory Fox.



A BRITISH COMMANDO IN THE HUNTING FIELD

IT WAS just before Christmas that the adjutant of a Com-mando which was quartered near here, came to see me and told me that he was looking for a billet for the commanding officer of his unit, whose wife was with him. We had never had soldiers billeted on us, and I confess that I was not inclined to accede to his request; but when he told me that the colonel's lady was an American—which was why he had come to me—I relented and said that perhaps we might be able to manage it. "Bring your colonel to see me to-morrow morning," I said, "and I will show him the rooms which are available, and if he likes them, perhaps we can come to some arrangement." The colonel came on the following morning and I think that we both of us realised at once that we should have no trouble in coming to an understanding. "We've never been P.G.s," he said, "and I don't suppose you've ever had any, but we would like to come here if you will have us." And so the matter was settled.

A week later, the colonel and his wife arrived and it was not many days before we were on very friendly terms with them. We found that we had a good many acquaintances and a good many tastes in common, and though the colonel was not a hunting man, he had hunted, and he was a sports-man to the core. For that matter, I rather think that all the commandos are sportsmen at heart. After all, it's a sporting job. We got talking about hunting one night after dinner and I mentioned the fact that some troops had been out with us on foot one day. The colonel pricked up his ears. "That's a darned good way to teach men to cross a country," he said, "and it teaches them much better than set exercises. Do you

mind if I bring some of my men out one day? They might ruin your day for you—head your fox and that sort of thing—but they would love it.” “Certainly not,” I said, “bring ’em out any time you want to. We’ve got a good meet near here week after next, on Friday. Would that do?” And so it was settled, and one morning a few days ago, when hounds met at the lodge gates of a famous old estate not very far from here, we found about 250 of the Commando gathered there, waiting for us. It was a popular meet, and since the school holidays were not over, there was quite a little field out besides, among them one or two officers mounted, and a retired general who rules over the local pony club. Presently the Commando colonel arrived and came over to me. “What do you want them to do?” he said. I pointed to a little spinney half a mile away, an island of trees in the green sea of the park meadows. “Do you see that spinney?” I said, “we often find there; we might try to hold one up, if you will tell your men to surround it.” “Better tell ’em yourself,” he said; so I explained what it was that we wanted to do and the reason for it, and away they went.

It was a beautiful morning—I wish I could have got a picture of that scene—the lovely park, with its great trees and its rolling acres of grass, with the old stone house, the scene of many a gay hunt breakfast in Squire Farquharson’s day, in the background. Presently I gave the signal to move off and hounds and hunt staff in traditional scarlet, with the mounted field coming on behind them, must have made a lovely picture as we jogged towards that covert which was surrounded by men of the Commando in battle dress, with no more lethal weapons than staves which they had cut in the nearby thickets. I wish hounds had found a fox in that covert: it would have been amusing to see whether he could have broken through the cordon of troops which had been thrown around it. Alas—it was blank; and so was the next covert, and the next, and it was some time before hounds

finally found a fox in Cole Hill, half a mile away. The troops were somewhat scattered by this time; but when they heard hounds find and heard the holloa from the far end, they "packed together"—as one would say of hounds—and started for the end of the covert. Many of them must have seen that fox as he turned back from the road which runs through the valley below, and I know that many others saw him as he ran through the covert and over the road beyond, with the pack screaming behind him—their shouts and yells told me that. I don't know whether our quarry was confused by the unaccustomed noises or not; but he didn't want to face the open and dodged back into covert again after about ten minutes.

It was a good scenting day and hounds stuck to his twisting line well, but he beat them in covert and there was a check which lasted some time. Two or three of the men said to me, "he beat you, didn't he? He'll get away now; hounds can't catch him," and a dozen other remarks, many of which were very funny. One man, wiser than the rest—for he had come from a hunting country, said, "Wait a bit, boys. Wait a bit. Maybe he's gone into that kale outside and lain down; he's pretty tired. I seen him when he come over the road back there." As a matter of fact, he was perfectly right; for when Will held his hounds along outside the covert, they hit off the line into the kale. There was a holloa on the far side, and in a few minutes we were all galloping up the hill on the other side of the valley after the flying pack, with the boys from the Commando strung out behind us. This time there was no covert; scent in the open was breast-high; and hounds drove on at top pace over the open fields and across the main road. We divided here; our whipper-in bearing right to try to get a view; and the huntsman and I, followed by the field, to the left. We could hear them running hard, there was a little rise of ground between us, and we couldn't see them. For three-quarters of a mile we went on this way, and then their cry

changed to that note which all old hunting men know so well, and a second later, we heard Miss Anne's shrill "Whoo-oop." Will turned to me, "They've killed him, Sir, I believe," he said. We turned into the field and there, sure enough, on the far side of it, was our whipper-in, off her horse, keeping hounds away from the dead fox.

"As stiff as a poker, he is, Will," she said in a professional way, trying to appear nonchalant. "I wish you could have seen 'em roll him over. He tried to get into the hedge, but they fairly pulled him back." She turned to me. "God, what fun!" she said, "I do love this game." It was just the same sort of remark—almost the same words—that the huntsman, Robin Dawe, made in Masfield's *Reynard the Fox*, when hounds were running:

"The dark green gorse and bright green holly,
' O, glorious God!' he said, ' how jolly."

and it was made in just the same spirit.

He *was* stiff, that fox, as stiff a fox as I've ever seen. Will blooded Farmer Childs's daughter, who had had a fall, but was well up in spite of it, and gave her the brush; and then found a rather disconsolate youngster, who said she had never been blooded, and seemed to be very keen to join that select band of other children who had earned that rite. So he untied the mask from his saddle and handed it to her after he had smeared her smiling little face from ear to ear. The men of the Commando were beginning to straggle up, and to the three leading ones we gave pads—which seemed to please them a lot. They were very keen, those men—many of them had never seen a fox hunted before—and I don't know when anything has given me more pleasure than to see how eager they were, and how they enjoyed it all.

The day was young, and the men too were young and fit, and most of them stayed with us while we drew again; but that first hunt—it was fifty minutes—had been pretty

fast, and when we found our second fox on Chapel Hill and hounds went away like distraction, they had a hard time keeping up. No lurking in covert for this pilot; he faced the open and gave us a hunt that was a real cracker; crossing the railway line, where Miss Anne distinguished herself by jumping in and out of the right of way over the locked railway gates, and then jumping in again when the hunted fox swung back and ran down the line, with hounds in full pursuit. She was alone with them and told me afterwards, when I remonstrated with her for her foolhardiness, that Peter Beckford had said that a whipper-in should always stay with hounds; and she was only trying to live up to his teachings. As a matter of fact, she probably saved the pack from a bad accident; for a train came along about that time; and though the engineer pulled up—as all the local engineers do in this sporting community—he might not have done so if she had not been there to signal to him. Peter Beckford didn't have to contend with railways in his day. Once off the track and on the grass again, hounds drove on, and I believe they would have surely killed their fox if he had not got to ground, where they marked him, at the end of forty-five minutes.

What a red letter day it was! One of the best I can remember, and one that is assuredly unique in the annals of foxhunting on both sides of the water.

THIRTY YEARS IS A LONG TIME

THE express train from London was making good time towards the west. I looked out of the window and had my first sight of that beautiful hunting country, about which I had read so much. Level fields, some of them green, where the spring-wheat was showing, some of them brown stubble, a few of them red where the soil had been turned up by the plough; big enclosures, most of them separated by stone walls that made me almost homesick for the stone walls of my native New England. Now and again the train passed close by some little village lying half-hidden by the trees.

My companion, who had been reading his evening newspaper, looked at his watch and stood up.

"We shall be there in a few moments," he said. "Better get your bags off the rack—this isn't a regular stop—but the company runs through so much of my land that they always stop the train for me. We're slowing up now."

An instant later the train came to a halt; the guard opened the door and helped us out with our luggage; signalled to the engine-driver; and with a cheery "Hope you have good sport to-morrow, Your Grace," swung himself on to the already moving train.

I had actually met my host, the late Duke of Beaufort, only a few hours before; but we had known each other by correspondence for some time, and since he had been kind enough to suggest that, if and when I came to England, I make myself known to him, I had taken advantage of his suggestion and he had promptly invited me to visit him at Badminton and have a day with his hounds. We had met for the first time at Paddington Station that afternoon and travelled down from London together, and much of the time

had been spent in talk about hunting matters. I was quite young and very shy in those days, and in considerable awe of the Duke, who was perhaps the most noted figure in the hunting world at that time; but His Grace soon put me at my ease, and by the time we left the train, my shyness had worn off. I was enchanted by my first sight of the charming little village that clusters near the gates of the park, and thrilled by my first view of Badminton itself, with its great façade which faces the vast stretches of green extending away for more than a mile to the White Lodge at the far end; and I shall always remember the warm welcome we received from the Duchess of Beaufort, who, with her two daughters—little girls then—greeted us on our arrival.

I had never stopped in such a big house before—it was simply too vast in extent for any American to picture it—and the Duke told me that, owing to taxation, they had been forced to shut half of it up. Wonderful pictures in every room; pictures of the Somerset family; paintings by the most famous old masters; and in the Duke's study, and the smoking-room scores of pictures of famous hounds and huntsmen, and of the great hunts of the past; all of which my host explained to me at great length. Many of them were familiar to me in prints—the one of Will Long on "Bertha"—and many others; and each one had a story. I could have spent many days looking at them, but the afternoon—or what was left of it—passed too quickly, and before I knew it, it was time to dress for dinner. As I came down that night, at the foot of the stairs were two footmen, resplendent in the Badminton livery, with powdered hair and knee-breeches, each of whom held a basket. In one were single flowers for the men, in the other small bunches of flowers for the ladies—such a pretty custom and all so simply done that it savoured not in the least of the ostentation which such a thing would seem in America. After dinner—and a very good one it was—the Duke and his two step-sons and I sat and talked hunting for a bit, and we all adjourned

to a delightful big sitting-room and chatted until it was time to turn in—quite early—for we were to hunt the next day, and the Duke had offered to mount me.

I shall never forget that day. It was a very great privilege to see the Duke hunting hounds himself, and I think that the best way to tell of it is to quote from a letter which I wrote to a friend at that time:

“Dear ‘C.’: I’m pretty tired to-night and I may not finish this letter; but I want to write it all to you while it is fresh in my mind; for we did have a rattling good day. Down for breakfast at nine-thirty—a great big hearty English breakfast—the Duke in the green livery of the Badminton Hunt staff, his two step-sons in the blue coats faced with buff which the field all wear, and the Duchess and her two little girls in blue habits with buff facings, which added an air of smartness to the Badminton Field. At ten-thirty we left in motors for the meet, which was at Chavendage House, some twelve miles away. For four miles we kept to Badminton Park, with its wonderful stretches of grass and herds of deer grazing under the trees, just as they have grazed for hundreds of years; and then we passed through the Park gates and out into the country beyond, arriving at the meet a few minutes before the allotted time. There was a big field out—somewhere between four and five hundred—most of them in the blue and buff of the hunt; some in black coats; a few in mufti; and only two besides myself in scarlet. The Duke does do it well! Besides himself and his two whippers-in, there were walkers, the huntsman and six second horsemen and two runners; all in hunt livery and I had nearly forgotten another laddie with a terrier in a terrier-bag on horseback. All the hunt staff wear green, and they were well mounted on thick-set dock-tail horses—one might almost call them cobs. I had two of the Duke’s enormous nags, very thick and coarse they looked to me; but I suppose I felt like a feather and they certainly carried me top-hole. Presently we trotted off to draw, and hounds had hardly been cheered

into covert, when out popped a fox at the far end. The whipper-in blew his whistle and in a minute the big dog-hounds came tumbling out and hit off the line with a great burst of music. It was a stone wall country—no ditches—so I felt quite at home. The fox didn't try to make a point at first; he tried a bit of twisting, and it was quite half an hour before he decided to face the open; but there was some nice jumping and a lot of hound work, which gave me a good chance to see what a wonderfully good huntsman His Grace is. Mind, he doesn't jump a fence, *not one* (he rides well over twenty stone—close to three hundred pounds), but, as he says himself, he "knows where the holes are," and he knows the entire country like a book and he is always with hounds; though how he does it, God knows! Presently the fox went away, and hounds hitting the line off, raced away across the open with a grand cry. For thirty-five minutes they never faltered, and they certainly can go a pace! The Duchess and her two daughters went as straight as strings—I never saw two such children to ride—the eldest, Blanche, is fifteen; the other, Diana, thirteen—and I can only say that I was quite content to ride beside them and very glad to be able to stay there.

"We got out of the stone-wall country and met hedges with ditches either on the landing or the take-off side—or both—but my horse never hesitated, never made a mistake, and jumped magnificently. The Duke was there, too, somehow, never jumping a fence, but always on hand if hounds had faltered (which they didn't) and at last we caught sight of our fox, just struggling over a ploughed field. His brush was wet and heavy with clay, and he was dead-beat. The Duke galloped out in front cheering his hounds; they got their heads up; caught sight of their beaten quarry; and in another minute had rolled him over, after as smart a burst as I have seen on this side of the water. The Duke turned around and saw me and looked pleased. 'Did he carry you well?' he asked, and smiled broadly when I waxed enthusiastic.

But the music! You never heard such music; it was better than the Boston Symphony Orchestra, by far!"

I shall never forget that first visit to Badminton, or the many kindnesses that grand old sportsman showed to me; for although I never saw him again, we corresponded regularly until he died many years later, and he was forever sending me hounds and writing me of the sport he loved so well, and of the successes of his son, the present Duke, whom I did not meet until I came to England to live. Thirty years ago—how the time flies—and what changes the years have brought!

1941

It was five o'clock when we left Lady Cooper's hospitable house, where we had partaken of a most delicious "High Tea," and started on our motor trip to Badminton. I had been there many times since that first visit; for the young Duke and I had much in common in our love of hunting; and, like his father, he had always been most generous in allowing me the use of his stallion hounds, and had in fact given me some of the most valuable sires that have ever been used at Cattistock. But foxhunting has played a very small part in the daily life of the younger generation of Englishmen in these days; and all the younger men of the nation—many of the older ones too—are devoting all their energies to hunting of a different sort.

The country looked much the same as in pre-war days; the harvest had been garnered, and the brown stubble fields seemed clamouring for the cry of hounds; but there was an air of businesslike alertness everywhere that seemed different from the old easy-going ways of thirty years ago. The village looked much the same as it had when I first saw it in 1912. The same thatched cottages clustering around the gates of the Park; the same neatly kept gardens, the same hospitable

village inn. Our mission on this visit was to give a theatrical entertainment for some of His Majesty's forces which were quartered in the neighbourhood; for, be it known, we Americans who have enjoyed the hospitality of England for the last twelve years are trying to do what we can to make life more agreeable for those men who have not yet gone overseas; and my wife, who happens to have been a successful London star, has organised a little theatrical company of her own, which, supported solely by voluntary contributions from America, has been touring the area occupied by the Southern Command and playing nightly in local theatres or village halls.

The Memorial Hall, built by the Dowager Duchess after the last great war, filled up rapidly. The present Duke was away on active service, but the young Duchess was bustling about seeing that every one had a seat—and that the wives of the soldiers, as well as the soldiers themselves, were made comfortable. The little hall was filled to overflowing—all except the front row. Suddenly there was a commotion outside, and then, as one of the best-beloved personages in England entered, every one rose and remained standing until she was seated. It was very impressive, that touch of the old England that was so much a part of the life of the country.

The curtain rose, the play began, the audience listened spell-bound as the actors played their parts in the hair-raising situations which are developed in the "thriller" called *Gashlight*, which was produced by The Mary Newcomb Players, and no one enjoyed it more than the royal personage who applauded enthusiastically at the final curtain and enchanted the little company by coming behind the scenes to thank them all personally for the evening's entertainment. As she came out, she stopped and said a few pleasant words to me when I was presented to her by the Duchess, who was acting as a sort of hostess on this occasion. When she had gone, the Duchess came to me and said:

"Mr. Higginson, my mother-in-law would be so pleased if Mrs. Higginson and you and all the company would come to supper with her. She lives close by, near the Park Gate." Of course we were delighted, and a few minutes later, we were welcomed by the old Dowager Duchess, looking just as lovely as she had looked on that first day when I had met her in the great hall at Badminton. Her little house was full of pictures of the old Duke, most of them in hunting kit, many of them sitting his wonderful great horses in the midst of the hounds he loved so well. I sat next to her at the bountiful supper which followed, and we talked much of the old days when she had gone so brilliantly behind the hounds which are now passing through such difficult times. She seemed so happy with her memories—and I felt it an honour to be able to share some of those memories with her—memories of days the like of which I hope may come back soon.

And, as I said "good-night" to her that evening, she said: "It's so nice to see you again, Mr. Higginson. It's a long time since you first came here, isn't it? Almost thirty years—many things have changed."

Yes. Many things have changed. Thirty years is a long time.

THE END

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